NATION

U'khand board urges transfer of students from illegal madrasas

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

Musk reacts to Grok row in India with laugh emoji

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

CSK lean on spin strength against depleted Mumbai

≫ Page: 8 ≪

www.twitter.com/EnglishSalar
www.facebook.com/EnglishSalar
www.instagram.com/dailysalarenglish
youtube.com/@dailysalardigital

SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 23 MARCH 2025 | SUNDAY | BENGALURU | 22 RAMADAN, 1446 AH | Vol 4 | Issue No 80 | Pages: 8

South leaders push for fair delimitation

In the Chennai meeting, DMK-backed JAC tells Centre to extend freeze by 25 more years

CHENNAI, 22 MARCH

DMK-led Joint Action Committee (JAC) strongly opposed the proposed population-based de-limitation, arguing that it would unfairly reduce representation for southern states. At a high-profile meeting on Saturday, attended by three Chief Ministers, a Deputy CM, and lead-ers from 14 parties, the committee demanded that the Centre extend the freeze on Parlia-mentary constituencies based on the 1971 Census for another 25 years.

A political consensus emerged to fight against population as the sole criterion for determin-ing constituency numbers, with leaders vowing to ensure "fair delimitation" that does not diminish representation for the South. The JAC also decided to submit a joint representation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the ongoing Parliamentary session.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin suggested forming an expert panel to devise both legal and political strategies, naming it the Joint Action Committee for Fair Delimitation. He em-phasised the need for public awareness and urged unity in resisting the Centre's move. "Our representation must not decline," he asserted.

Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan likened the delimitation exercise to the "sword of Damocles", accusing the BJP-led government of proceeding without consultation. Karnataka Deputy CM D K Shivakumar alleged that the Centre aimed to reduce southern states' representation, while Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann claimed the BJP was manipulating seat allocation to ben-efit states where it has electoral strength.

Telangana CM A Revanth Reddy warned that if delimitation is based on population, South India will lose its political voice. "North will make us secondary citizens," he cautioned, in-sisting that South will not accept population-based delimitation. He also urged the Centre not to increase Lok Sabha seats through this process.

BRS Working President K T Rama Rao raised concerns over the disproportionate increase in seats in populous northern states, further skewing political power.

With Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu next year, the meeting served as a major political boost for the DMK, solidifying its leadership on the issue. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

BRS leader KT Rama Rao, Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan, TN CM MK Stalin, Karnataka DyCM DK Shivakumar, Telangana CM Revanth Reddy, Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann during the first JAC meeting of states over delimitation in Chennai on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

> **We are not against delimitation; the name itself will say that we are in favour of fair delimi-tation. This struggle will not end with us meeting – deliberating – and passing a resolution for one day. It is very necessary to take continuous action to establish rights**
>
> —MK Stalin, Tamil Nadu CM

> **The very foundation of our democracy—federalism—is under threat. The very pillars of our federal democracy, enshrined by Babasaheb Ambedkar and the visionary framers of our Constitution, are being dismantled brick by brick**
>
> —DK Shivakumar, Deputy CM

Violence erupts as Khalistani slogans target buses in HP

AMRITSAR, 22 MARCH

Four buses belonging to the Himachal Road Transport Corporation (HRTC) had their windshields smashed at a local bus stand on Saturday by unknown perpetrators, as police confirmed the occur-rence of pro-Khalistan slogans written on the vehicles. The buses were parked with no occupants inside when the vandalism occurred. Authorities are investigating the incident, which follows a similar attack in Mohali's Kharar, where a bus sustained damage from two unidentified individuals. Tensions have been rising in the re-gion after locals in Himachal Pradesh removed flags featuring the image of slain militant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale from the bikes of a group of Punjab youths. In reaction, activists from Dal Khalsa and Sikh Youth of Punjab have adorned HRTC and private buses with Bhindranwale's image in Hoshiarpur. *—PTI*

CJI forms panel to probe cash at HC judge's home

NEW DELHI, 22 MARCH

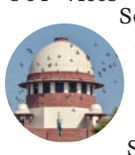
Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna on Saturday constituted a three-member committee to conduct an inquiry into al-legations against Justice Yashwant Varma from whose official residence a large stash of cash was allegedly dis-covered after a fire. Khanna ordered the in-house inquiry after getting a report from Chief Justice of Delhi High Court DK Upadhyay and asked him not to assign any judicial work to Justice Varma. The purported discovery of a huge stash of cash happened when a fire broke out at Varma's Lutyens Delhi residence on 14 March. Delhi Fire Services Chief Atul Garg, however, denied claims of the cash discovery by the firefighters. The incident created ripples in the legal circuit, with many wanting the judge's resignation while criticising the Supreme Court collegium decision to transfer him. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

SC JUDGES VISIT STRIFE-TORN MANIPUR

CHURACHANDPUR, 22 MARCH

A Supreme Court team, led by Justice BR Gavai, visited Churachandpur district in Manipur on Satur-day, where violence has displaced many. The judges met with internally displaced individuals and inaugurated legal and medical ser-vices from the Mini Secretariat at Lamka.



The delegation included Justices Vikram Nath, MM Sundresh, and KV Vishwanathan, along with Chief Justice of the Manipur High Court, Justice D Krishnakumar, and Justice Golmei Gaiphulshilu. Upon their arrival, they received a warm welcome from the local legal community at Imphal airport. Since May 2023, ethnic clashes between the Imphal Valley-based Meitei community and the hills-based Kuki-Zo groups have resulted in over 250 fatalities and left thousands homeless. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

STATE SEES NO VIOLENCE

250 detained as pro-Kannada groups observe K'taka bandh

BENGALURU, 22 MARCH

The State capital witnessed a largely peaceful Karnataka Bandh on Saturday, with police ensuring tight security measures.

The 12-hour shutdown was called by pro-Kannada groups to protest the assault on a state-run bus conductor in Belagavi last month for not conversing in Marathi.

In Bengaluru, activists staged demonstrations at the Mysore Bank circle and the BMTC and KSRTC bus stands at Majestic. Kannada activist Vatal Nagaraj attempted to lead a rally from Town Hall, but police detained him, along with around 250 supporters. They were taken on BMTC buses to Freedom Park, where they continued their demonstration.

"We deployed senior officers for patrolling, and I have personally inspected the city. No unfortunate incident was reported," Bengaluru Police Commissioner B Dayananda told Salar News.

The commissioner said warnings were issued that any attempt to forcibly close businesses or hotels would be met with strict action. Later in the day, Nagaraj said, "The bandh was successful in all districts. This struggle will continue," he said. Meanwhile, in several parts of the state, pro-kannada groups staged protests and appealed to shop-keepers to support their cause. But most of the shops stayed open.

In Mysuru, activists under the Cauvery Action Committee staged a protest at the entrance of the KSRTC Suburban Bus Stand as well as the Central Bus Stand at Bannimantap. Police detained and shifted them to City Armed Reserve Police ground and later released them. In Davangere too, the protesters took to the streets.

Sources in Belagavi said the KSRTC buses were plying as usual but there was limited movement of buses to and from Maharashtra.

—Salar News & Agencies

>>>More on Page 2

Kannada activists were detained in Bengaluru on Saturday as they protest during the bandh, demanding a ban on Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti for its alleged atrocities against Kannadigas. Roads leading to Town Hall witnessed traffic congestion for some time during the rally, amid tight security measures **PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Fadnavis threatens bulldozer action on rioters

NAGPUR, 22 MARCH

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said on Saturday that the government will recover the cost of property damaged during the recent Nagpur violence from rioters and roll bulldozer "if necessary".

He said if the perpetrators of violence failed to compensate, their properties would be seized and sold to recover the losses.

He emphasised that strict action would be taken against those who attacked police officers during the unrest.

Fadnavis stressed that the incident cannot be termed "intelligence failure", but the intelligence (gath-ering) could have been better. " He said 104 individuals were identified so far. Action has been initiated against 92 people, including 12 minors. The violence erupted on 17 March, after rumours spread that a 'chadar' with religious inscriptions had been burnt during protests led by VHP demanding the removal of Aurangzeb's tomb in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar.

Fadnavis said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's scheduled visit to Nagpur on 30 March would proceed as planned.

He said the situation in Nagpur is calm now, and efforts are underway to relax the curfew imposed in certain areas.

He stated the distribution of compensation for victims would begin soon and 68 posts that aggravated the situation had been identified and deleted.

He said those who circulated inflammatory content would be charged as co-accused. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Palestinians mourn over the bodies of family members who were killed in an Israeli airstrike that hit their home in Gaza on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

Israel bombs Lebanon after 1st attack since ceasefire

BEIRUT, 22 MARCH

Israel launched significant air-strikes on Lebanon over the weekend in retaliation for rock-et fire targeting its northern territories, resulting in the deaths of two individuals, including a child, marking the most intense exchange of fire since a ceasefire was established with Hezbollah. This incident un-folded earlier when rockets were fired from Lebanon into Israel, reigniting concerns regarding the fragile ceasefire in place.

Hezbollah officials claimed they were not responsible for the recent rocket launch, describing it as "primitive." In response to the early Saturday attacks, Israel's military stated it would take severe ac-tion and confirmed that the strikes targeted Hezbollah facilities, including rocket launchers and a command centre in southern Lebanon.

Lebanon's Prime Minister, Nawaf Salam, instructed the military to take necessary precautions but emphasised the country's desire to avoid war. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) expressed alarm over the escalation, urging all parties to refrain from actions that could destabilise the region further.

On the same weekend, Israeli airstrikes in Gaza intensified, resulting in the deaths of at least nine individuals. *—PTI*

10 FLIGHTS DIVERTED

Bengaluru's 1st summer rain brings relief, disruption

BENGALURU, 22 MARCH

Bengaluru, often termed the 'Silicon Valley of India', experienced its first summer downpour this week, which was marked by thunderstorms, lightning, and strong winds across various parts of the city. Significant rainfall was reported in North, West, and South Bengaluru.

At least 10 flights going to Bengaluru were diverted to Chennai due to heavy rain in the capital, air-port officials said.

IndiGo in a post on X said unfavourable weather conditions in Bengaluru continue to impact flights.

Air India also said flight operations are impacted due to adverse weather conditions, resulting in air traffic congestion in Bengaluru.

In North Bengaluru, areas such as Hebbal, Chikkajala, Sanjaynagar, and Devanahalli faced intense showers, with some regions experiencing hail-storms. Meanwhile, South Bengaluru received heavy rainfall in Whitefield, Hoodi, Mahadevapura, KR Puram, Kadugodi, Attiguppe, Vijayanagar, Majestic, and Rajajinagar.

Excited residents took to social media platform X to express their joy over the long-awaited summer rain and the subsequent cool weather. Dr Deepak Krishnamurthy shared a photo from his son in Bengaluru, longing to escape the sweltering heat of Mumbai. User Arjun Vasudevan tweeted about the "stormy evening after a long day". Meanwhile, Krshbhakt thanked Karnataka's Deputy Chief Minister, DK Shivakumar, for performing the Cauvery Aarti, suggesting it brought the rain. B Pathak fondly recalled Bengaluru's earlier years, when it was referred to as a 'hill station'. However, the downpour caused significant disruptions, with Bengaluru Traffic Police reporting slow-moving traffic due to waterlogging, particularly on Nagawara Road. Despite the challenges, the rain provided much-needed relief from the heat, dropping temperatures from 32°C to a pleasant 26°C by the evening of 22 March. *—Salar News*

Bengaluru Traffic Police reported slow-moving traffic due to waterlogging, particularly on Nagawara Road **PHOTO: PTI**

Bidar DC gets warrant over land encroachment case

BIDAR, 22 MARCH

Karnataka Special Court for Land Grabbing Prohibition has issued a warrant against the Bidar Deputy Commissioner (DC) for failing to submit a report on an alleged land encroachment case involving Aurad MLA Prabhu Chavan. The court directed the Superintendent of Police to execute the warrant with a ₹1 lakh security bond. The case was filed by former Aurad Chandori Gram Panchayat President Deepak Patil Chandori, who accused Chavan of illegally occupying 3 acres and 19 guntas of government land in Kolar (B) village, Bidar Taluk, using forged documents. The complaint also named several officials for allegedly supporting the encroachment. Despite multiple court extensions, the Bidar DC failed to submit the report, leading to the warrant. Chandori alleged political pressure behind the delay and vowed to continue his legal fight. He noted that former Bidar DC H.R. Mahadev had already declared the land as government property, yet no action was taken. "The court's order proves that no one is above the law," he asserted.

—Salar News

Youths attack couple in Nanjangud

MYSURU, 22 MARCH

A gang of 20 "upper-caste" youths allegedly assaulted a couple belonging to a "lower caste" at Kaggaluru village in Nanjangud taluk on Friday night, said the police. Police identified the victims as Savitha and Mallesh. They said the couple's son Mallikarjuna owed money to some "upper-caste" youths and had had an altercation with them over repayment. The gang, led by a youth named Yogesh, allegedly entered their house on Friday night and assaulted the couple. Mallesh, suffered injuries and has been admitted to hospital, police said. The couple later filed a complaint at the Hullahalli police station, in which they said "lower caste communities" are living in fear in the village after the attack and sought protection from police. *—Salar News*

ASI's daughter ends life by falling under train in Mandya

MYSURU, 22 MARCH

A 19-year-old woman has tragically taken her own life by falling in front of a moving train near Banidgowda Layout in Mandya. Identified as Suhana, she was the daughter of Ansar Pasha, an assistant police sub-inspector with the Mandya Armed Reserve Police Force. According to reports, Suhana was a BA student in Mysuru and left her college on Saturday afternoon before the incident. She subsequently rode her scooter to the railway tracks, where she was struck by the Chamundi Express. The Railway Protection Force arrived promptly and filed a case of unnatural death. Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

—Salar News

Delimitation threat to democracy: DKS

DKS dubs it political assault on South

CHENNAI/BENGALURU, 22 MARCH

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar has warned that India's federal democracy is under threat due to the proposed delimitation, which is based solely on population. Speaking at a meeting in Chennai, he called the move a political assault on southern states for successfully controlling population growth, improving literacy, and empowering women.

"The very foundation of our democracy—federalism—is being dismantled brick by brick," Shivakumar said.

"Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and every progressive state must choose between submission or resistance. We choose resistance," Shivakumar declared.

He argued that Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and other southern states, which contribute significantly to India's growth, are being penalised for their development efforts. Karnataka alone contributes over Rs 4 lakh crore annually to the Centre's Gross Tax Revenue but receives only a fraction in return. "For every rupee Karnataka contributes, only 13 paise comes back. This is not just economic injustice; it is systemic plunder," he said. Shivakumar also criticised the imposition of Hindi under 'One Nation, One Language', calling it an attempt to erase India's linguistic diversity. *—PTI*

TN CM MK Stalin greets DyCM DK Shivakumar during the first Joint JAC over delimitation in Chennai *PHOTO: PTI*

DKS welcomes BJP's black flags

DK Shivakumar said he welcomed the black flags shown to him by the BJP when he reached Chennai on Saturday.

"I was never afraid when they sent me to Tihar Jail," Shivakumar said in Chennai.Shivakumar was booked and jailed along with others for alleged offences under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The Supreme Court later quashed the money laundering case against him. About Tamil Nadu BJP President K Annamalai, Shivakumar said he has served Karnataka during his stint as an IPS officer. "This officer (Annamalai), poor man, is from my state. He has served us. He knows our strength. Let him do his job. I wish him all the best," the Deputy CM told reporters. *—PTI*

Is Oppn genuinely concerned: RSS

RSS questions Oppn's agenda over delimitation

BENGALURU, 22 MARCH

RSS joint general secretary Arun Kumar on Saturday asked if those discussing the delimitation process have any political agenda, or they were genuinely concerned about it.

As the leaders of some of the southern states gathered in Chennai, Kumar asked them to avoid such discussions as the Centre has not initiated the process yet.

"In my opinion, those who are taking part in the discussions on the delimitation should introspect whether it's their political agenda or they are genuinely thinking about the interest of their region," Kumar said, during a press briefing.

"Let them (Stalin and others) think about it and you (media) should ask them if the delimitation process has actually started," he added.

The RSS leader was here as part of the three-day meeting of the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha (ABPS), the highest decision making body of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) taking place in Bengaluru.

The RSS leader opined that the discussion should happen when the delimitation process starts and an Act is drafted.

Noting that delimitation is a constitutional process in India and elections are conducted under a democratic process, Kumar said delimitation happens for elections under a law. *—PTI*

RSS Joint Secretary CR Mukunda with ABPS Sunil Ambekar during a meet in Bengaluru *PHOTO: PTI*

RSS worried about B'desh Hindus

RSS expressed serious concern about the persecution of the Hindu and other minorities at the hands of radical Islamist elements in Bangladesh after the regime change there. On the second day of the meeting of the ABPS, the highest decision-making body of the RSS, a resolution was passed on Bangladesh. "ABPS expresses its serious concern on the unabated and planned violence, injustice and oppression faced by the Hindu and other minority communities in Bangladesh," the resolution read. It further said that during the recent regime change in Bangladesh, several incidents of attacks on Mutts, temples, Durgapuja pandals and educational institutions; desecration of deities; barbaric killings; looting of propertiesl abduction and molestation of women and forcible conversions are being continuously reported.

No flare-ups in State amid bandh

Traffic on International Airport Road was normal on Saturday despite the Karnataka Bandh called by Kannada activists. BMTC and KSRTC buses also operated as usual, as transport services did not support the bandh. *PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD*

BELAGAVI/ MYSURU 22, MARCH

The Karnataka Bandh on Saturday passed off peacefully in Belagavi and other northern parts of the state with protesters demonstrating without any untoward event. Normal life was not disrupted, while transportation and educational, commercial and financial institutions functioned as usual.

The owners of the private and public goods carriers and hotel owners' associations said they supported the activists' demands but did not participate in the bandh to avoid inconvenience to people.

Hundreds of Kannada activists who protested in various parts of Belagavi were taken into custody. Various Kannada organisations also held a joint protest march from Ashok Circle (Kote Kere) to Rani Channamma Circle.

The North-West Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (NWKSRTC) did not ply buses across Maharashtra border.

The bandh evoked poor response in Mysuru city and other parts of the district.

A group of pro-Kannada activists under the Cauvery Action Committee staged a protest at the entrance of the KSRTC sub-urban bus stand as well as the Central Bus stand at Bannimantap. However, Lashkar Police detained and shifted them to City Armed Reserve (CAR) Police ground and released them later.

Bus services were affected for a few hours following the protest

The bandh also received mixed responses in Mandya, as the pro- Kannada leaders staged a roadblock at Sanjaya Circle, blocking the Mysuru–Bengaluru highway. The shops and commercial establishments wore a deserted look, signalling the success of the bandh.

Schools and colleges functioned as usual, with private colleges maintaining their regular schedules. Exams were conducted without any disruption. Shops and commercial establishments remained open throughout the day, and retail shop owners confirmed smooth functioning. *—Salar News*

Marathi film screening halted in Belagavi

BELAGAVI, 22 MARCH

The screening of the Marathi film 'Followers' was abruptly halted in Belagavi by Kannada activists due to its contentious themes related to the Karnataka-Maharashtra border and language disputes. Police instructed the theatre to cease the screening until further notice.

Filmed in Belagavi and its neighbouring areas, "Followers" features a cast of both Kannada and Marathi speakers, with the first show scheduled at Chandan-Inox theatre at 8.10pm on Friday. Activists waved concerns over portrayals of border tensions and claims of harassment faced by Marathi speakers in Karnataka, including a scene depicting a decline in Marathi businesses following the installation of Kannada signboards.

Members of the Karnataka Rakshana Vedike (Shivaramegowda faction) gathered at the theatre, urging the owners not to proceed with the screening. Tensions escalated between the activists and attendees, many of whom had family or friends involved in the film.

As activists entered, theatre staff promptly removed promotional posters. Police soon arrived, and Belagavi Police Commissioner Ada Martin ordered the theatre manager to halt the screening. The film's director, Harshad Nalavade, a Belagavi native and BE graduate, expressed disappointment, stating that the project took seven years to create through crowdfunding, and stressed that the film contains no controversial content.

"Instead of support, we feel discouraged in pursuing filmmaking," he lamented. *—Salar News*

Farmer's child wins 15 medals in KVAFSU

YOHAN P HONNADDI
BIDAR, 22 MARCH

Ravina, a farmer's daughter from Nagenahalli village, Hosadurga taluk, has achieved an exceptional feat by securing 15 gold medals in her BVSc & AH degree from Bengaluru Veterinary College under Karnataka Veterinary, Animal and Fisheries Sciences University (KVAFSU).

In the university's 20-year history, only one student has won 16 gold medals, while two others, including Ravina, have received 15.

Her father, Kumar, a small farmer, worked tirelessly to support her education. Despite losing her mother, Saakamma, during her pre-university studies, Ravina persevered with the support of her family.

"The course was extended to six years due to COVID-19. The second and third years were particularly challenging, but I stayed determined," she told Salar News, adding that her passion for animals and agriculture drove her career choice.

Dakshith PL from Chikkenahalli, Challakere, won six gold medals in his MVSc degree from Bengaluru Veterinary College and is now pursuing a PhD at KVAFSU.

Bengaluru's Aditya Chidananda Eshwarala secured nine gold medals in BVSc & AH. Despite securing third rank in CET, he deliberately chose veterinary science, believing in the importance of pet healthcare. "This field is growing rapidly, with significant opportunities worldwide," he shared. KVAFSU's 14th convocation will be held in Bidar on 25 March at 11am, where 634 students will graduate. 46 outstanding students will receive 96 gold medals, including 35 university and 61 sponsored medals.

—Salar News

AAP PROTESTS TREE CUTTING ON ALI ASKER ROAD FOR GOVT OFFICE

BENGALURU, 22 MARCH

A protest broke out on Saturday against the felling of 23 mature trees on Ali Asker Road, opposite the Embassy, to facilitate the construction of a new government office. The demonstration was led by AAP, alongside citizens and environmental activists.

Prakash Nedungadi, treasurer of AAP Karnataka, said, "Cutting down 23 beautiful, old trees in the city centre for a government office reflects the Congress Government's misguided efforts in promoting 'Brand Bengaluru'," he stated. He accused Minister HK Muniyappa of approving the tree felling despite opposition.

Residents questioned why the building's design could not have accommodated the trees. "If the government behaves in this manner, what can we expect from private developers?" remarked one citizen. While Forest Department officials confirmed that all permits were secured via an expert committee, protesters remain sceptical. *—Salar News*

BWSSB eyes world record for max pledges

BENGALURU, 22 MARCH

The Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), in collaboration with the BBMP and the State government, conducted Cauvery Aarti at Sankey Tank on 21 March. The event was aimed at raising awareness about the importance of water conservation, promoting practices such as saving water, reusing treated water, groundwater recharge and rainwater harvesting.

Dr Ram Prasath Manohar V, the BWSSB chairman, joined the cleaning drive at the Sankey Tank premises after the Cauvery Aarti, marking World Water Day with action.

Amid public concerns over environmental impact, the BWSSB took extra care to comply with all legal and court directives, especially after citizens raised strong objections ahead of the event.

Manohar told Salar News that care was taken to ensure that residents in the surrounding areas of Sankey Tank, who go to the place for daily walks, were not inconvenienced the next day.

"The event closed by 9.50pm as per the law, and by 10 PM, our BWSSB team began the cleanup. I personally led the drive... A total of 120 people, including BWSSB and BBMP staffers, as well as volunteers, participated. While the BBMP cleaned the roads, the BWSSB tidied the l a k e b e d , " Manohar said, adding that the event was a forerunner for the World Water Pledge Acceptance campaign (Jalave Jeeve) being held from 24 to 28 March.

The BWSSB eyes a Guinness World Record for the maximum number of people taking the pledge during the week-long campaign. —Salar News

COPS URGE CAUTION

Underage driving cases surge in City despite strict measures

BENGALURU, 22 MARCH

Despite stringent measures by the Transport and Traffic Police Departments, underage driving incidents continue to rise in Bengaluru, leading to serious accidents and legal consequences.

"Underage driving is a criminal offence, and police have intensified actions by seizing vehicles and filing cases against parents," said Joint Commissioner of Police, Traffic, MN Anucheth.

In the past year, Bengaluru recorded 532 cases of minor-related traffic violations, including reckless driving and stunts. Among these, 121 cases were filed against minors, 79 against parents, and 520 vehicles were seized. Under the Motor Vehicles Act (1988), parents permitting minors to drive face fines, up to three months of imprisonment, or both. Additionally, vehicle registrations may be suspended for a year.

- Recently, six parents in Bengaluru South were fined Rs 25,000 each after their children were caught driving recklessly.

"No matter how responsible a minor may seem, they lack the physical and mental maturity to drive safely," Anucheth stated, emphasising the risks posed to both minors and the public.

To curb violations, Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP) conducts regular special operations, awareness programs in schools and colleges, and public meetings with parents. The department is also proposing a stricter penalty under Section 199A(5) of the MV Act, preventing minors involved in violations from obtaining a driving licence until 25. Parents of minors performing stunts may face fines of up to 25,000, while courts may impose three years of imprisonment or Rs 1 lakh fines under the Juvenile Justice Act.

Recently, six parents in Bengaluru South were fined Rs 25,000 each after their children were caught driving recklessly. Two minors were involved in three accidents, while others performed stunts. Last year, Kamakshipalya traffic police filed six cases against parents, submitting chargesheets to the Juvenile Court.

Authorities urge parents to take responsibility and ensure minors do not engage in illegal driving.

—Salar News

2022	2023	2024
Registered cases 283	Registered cases 219	Registered cases 532
Vehicles seized 186	Vehicles seized 214	Vehicles seized 520
Cases against minors 23	Cases against minors 74	Cases against minors 121
Cases against parents 22	Cases against parents 71	Cases against parents 79

BJP calls Oppn's delimitation meet 'drama'

Tamil Nadu BJP held black flag protests, said the meet was to mask DMK's corruption

CHENNAI, 22 MARCH

BJP staged black flag protests across Tamil Nadu against the delimitation meeting convened by the ruling DMK on 22 March, which invited Chief Ministers and representatives from non-BJP ruled states.

The Tamil Nadu unit of the BJP accused the DMK of orchestrating a political drama instead of addressing the state's genuine concerns.

Party leader K Annamalai dubbing the discussions as 'drama.'

His party colleague and former Governor, Dr Tamilisai Soundararjan alleged the concerned CMs who attended the meeting did so to hide the misgoverance in the respective states.

"There are so many corruption charges in Telangana, Kerala. Their own people will be against their CMs attending this event," she claimed while speaking to PTI Videos.

"Instead of calling this a delimitation meeting, it can be called corruption hiding meeting," she added

Annamalai said the black-flag agitation was being held to protest against Chief Minister M K Stalin for 'compromising' on state's rights in key issues including the Mullaiperiar and Cauvery water disputes with neighbouring Kerala and Karnataka, respectively.

Tamil Nadu BJP President K Annamalai holds black flags leads a protest against the delimitation meeting in Chennai **PHOTO: PTI**

Besides the Mullaiperiar issue with Kerala, "now waste--medical, human and animal, from Thiruvananthapuram is being dumped in Tamil Nadu, whether it be Tenkasi or Coimbatore. This is happening after the Communist government came to power," he alleged.

Why was Stalin not raising these issues with Vijayan or the Mekedatu reservoir row with Shivakumar, he asked.

The project envisages construction of a balancing reservoir across river Cauvery in Mekedatu in Karnataka.

"Stalin has visited Kerala four times, but the said issues have not been taken up (with Vijayan). But they are discussing a matter that is not an issue at all-- a result of their own imaginations," he said about delimitation.

"All our rights have been sacrificed by Stalin, so this blackflag protest," Annamalai said. *—PTI*

JAGAN WRITES TO PM ABOUT DELIMITATION

AMARAVATI, 22 MARCH

Former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to carry out the delimitation exercise in such a manner that no state would suffer any reduction in representation in the Parliament.

In a letter to the Prime Minister dated 21 March, the YSRCP chief highlighted that the gravity the issue has to disrupt the social and political harmony of the country.

"Request for the delimitation exercise to be conducted in such a manner that no state would have to endure any reduction in its representation in the Lok Sabha or the Rajya Sabha," said Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Reddy said the Constitution should be amended so that no state would have any reduction in its representation.

The YSRCP did not mark its attendance at the all-party meeting. *—PTI*

7-POINT RESOLUTION OF THE JAC

- Delimitation carried out by the Centre should be transparent.
- Freeze delimitation based on 1971 census for another 25 years.
- States that have successfully implemented population control measures should not be penalised.
- A core committee consisting of MPs from the states will coordinate strategies to counter any moves by the Centre that go against the principles outlined in the resolution.
- The Core Committee will submit a joint representation to the Prime Minister during the current Parliamentary session.
- Parties from the participating states will work towards passing resolutions in their respective Legislative Assemblies to express their concerns to the Centre.
- The JAC will undertake a coordinated strategy to raise awareness among citizens.

The proposed delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies is hanging over our heads like the sword of Damocles

-Pinarayi Vijayan, Kerala Chief Minister

There is no clarity on delimitation, and we are concerned. Delimitation should be done, but in a fair manner. We are in touch with the DMK

-Supriya Sule, Maharashtra NCP (SP) Leader

If Parliament seats are divided based on population, the South will suffer an irreparable loss. North India's domination will further intensify. Isn't this discrimination? We will not tolerate limiting the South under the guise of delimitation.

- YS Sharmila, Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee President

Population control has been our contribution towards a positive national agenda and building a strong India. Delimitation based only on population figures will be unfair to the states that have worked hard to reduce their population growth rates

- Naveen Patnaik, BJD President

PoK authorities return bodies of 2 missing from J&K

SRINAGAR, 22 MARCH

Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) authorities handed over the bodies of two people, who had drowned in the Jhelum river, to their Indian counterparts at the Kaman post along the Line of Control (LoC) on Saturday, officials said. Yasir Hussain Shah, from Busgran area of Uri in Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district, and Asiya Bano, from Kundi Barjala area of Uri, had been missing since 5 March, after they had reportedly jumped into the river on the same day. After a long search to trace the two, Shah's body was spotted floating near the Kaman post along the LoC in north Kashmir's Baramulla district on 20 March. Authorities from the Indian side took the matter up and eventually retrieved both the bodies from the river. *—PTI*

Assam BJP asks MLA to apologise for abusing Oppn

GUWAHATI, 22 MARCH

Assam BJP on Saturday directed its MLA Rupjyoti Kurmi to apologise to the people of the state for lunging at the Opposition members while hurling abuses in the assembly a day ago. State party President Dilip Saikia, in a letter to Kurmi, said his behaviour inside the assembly on Friday was against democratic traditions. Noting that BJP is a party with discipline and tolerance, Saikia maintained that Kurmi's actions were against the party's values and manner. Saikia urged him not to repeat such behaviour in the future. Kurmi has already apologised in the assembly for his behaviour. A former Congressman, Kurmi, who has been representing the Mariani constituency in the Assembly since 2006, had switched over to BJP in 2021. *—PTI*

WB BJP protests against women working in bars

KOLKATA, 22 MARCH

Women's wing of the BJP on Saturday held a rally here protesting the passage of a bill in West Bengal Assembly allowing women to work in bars. Claiming that Trinamool Congress government was unable to provide job opportunities to women in the state, BJP women's cell leader Falguni Patra maintained that this is the reason that such steps are being taken by the ruling dispensation. West Bengal assembly on Wednesday passed the bill to allow women to work in bars by amending the Bengal Excise Act, 1909. "The state has failed to provide security to women in various spheres of life and now they are being driven to work in such places where their safety can get breached," Patra said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

HP CM requests aid for 2023 monsoon losses

SHIMLA, 21 MARCH

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu requested Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday to release the compensation amount for losses suffered by the hill state during 2023 monsoon. Sukhu, who met Shah in Delhi, said the state had claimed financial assistance under post-disaster needs assessment but the relief is still awaited from the Centre, according to a statement. He informed Shah that the state suffered heavy losses due to rains severely affecting drinking water supply, irrigation schemes, infrastructure, roads, bridges and relief-and-rehabilitation measures. However, the state has so far managed from its own resources. Heavy rains triggered floods and landslides in the state in July and August, 2023 and about 550 people died during monsoon season that year. *—PTI*

14 more held in Nagpur, number hits 105

NAGPUR, 22 MARCH

At least 14 more people have been arrested in connection with the violence in Nagpur earlier this week, taking the total number of arrests to 105, a senior police official has said.

According to the police, 14 persons, including 10 juveniles, were nabbed on Friday.

The official said three more FIRs have been registered in connection with the incident.

"Fourteen accused were arrested from different parts of the city in connection with the riots. Three more FIRs have been registered related to the riots," Nagpur police commissioner Ravinder Kumar Singhal said.

Meanwhile, curfew imposed in 10 out of the 11 police station areas has either been removed or eased, a police officer said.

Large-scale stone pelting and arson were reported in several parts of Nagpur on 17 March over rumours that a "chadar" with holy inscriptions was burnt during protests led by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) seeking the removal of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's tomb, which is in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar district.

Thirty-three police personnel, including three Deputy Commissioner of Police-rank officers, were injured during the violence. Key accused Fahim Khan is among those booked for sedition. *—PTI*

Police personnel following violence that erupted during protests by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), in Nagpur **PHOTO: PTI**

Man injured in Nagpur violence dies

NAGPUR, 22 MARCH

A 40-year-old man, who sustained injuries in the violence, died while undergoing treatment at a hospital on Saturday, an official said. A hospital official said Irfan Ansari died at 1.20pm at the Indira Gandhi Government Medical College & Hospital (IGGMCH). Ansari, a welder, had been admitted with grievous wounds. *—PTI*

Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) members burn an effigy to protest against the Punjab government over the police action on protesting farmers at Punjab border **PHOTO: PTI**

Farmers protest evictions in Punjab as tensions rise

CHANDIGARH, 22 MARCH

The Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee (KMSC) has staged protests in Punjab, burning effigies of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in response to the eviction of farmers from the Shambhu and Khanauri border points by the state police. Following the police crackdown on Wednesday, a number of farmer leaders, including Sarwan Singh Pandher, were detained while returning from a meeting with Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan in Chandigarh.

Reports indicate that around 125 protesters are currently imprisoned in Patiala, with additional detentions in Nabha and Sangrur jails.

Farmer leader Guramneet Singh Mangat stated, "We met with the farmers in Patiala jail, and they remain determined to continue the fight."

KMSC leader Sukhwinder Singh condemned the government's actions, demanding the release of those detained and expressing concern over the alleged disappearance of farmers' belongings following the police intervention, including trolleys, air-conditioners, and other essential items.

Farmers had set up temporary structures along the highways for their protest, which the police dismantled using JCB machines. The KMSC has vowed to intensify their agitation. *—PTI*

CONG ACCUSES M'RASHTRA GOVT OF BIAS

NAGPUR, 22 MARCH

Maharashtra Congress leader Manikrao Thakare accused the Mahayuti government of bias against a specific community. Thakare claimed police barred his party's fact-finding committee from accessing affected areas, raising concerns over an impartial investigation.

"Why was permission given for a protest aiming to hurt religious sentiment and faith," he asked. "Along with a replica of Aurangzeb's grave, a green 'chadar' with verses from the Quran was burnt and there is evidence,"

The Congress leader asked why cases should be registered against only those who pelted stones. "What action has been taken against those who instigated the violence," he asked. *—PTI*

CONG CHIEF COMPARES CM TO AURANGZEB

PUNE, 22 MARCH

Harshvardhan Sapkal, the president of Maharashtra's Congress party, has stirred controversy by likening the governance of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis to that of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. His remarks triggered a backlash from the ruling coalition, which accused him of disrespecting Fadnavis.

"Beed sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh was murdered, a woman was raped in Pune and there was violence in Parbhani. The state is under Tughlaqi rule. I stand by my statement that the administration of Fadnavis and that of Aurangzeb is similar," Sapkal said.

"Fadnavis should resign as the state needs a fulltime home minister," the Congress leader said. *—PTI*

UNFULFILLED PROMISES

Only 3 of 11 tribal museums completed in 5yrs: Parl panel

NEW DELHI, 22 MARCH

A parliamentary panel said that more than five years after the government announced the setting up of museums to honour tribal freedom fighters, many remain incomplete, and work has not even begun on three of them.

In a report tabled in the Lok Sabha recently, the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment said the Union Tribal Affairs Ministry has supported 11 such museums in 10 states to recognize the contributions of tribal leaders.

However, it pointed out that only three -- Bhagwan Birsa Munda Memorial Freedom Fighter Museum in Ranchi, Jharkhand; Badal Bhoi State Tribal Freedom Fighters Museum in Chhindwara, Madhya Pradesh; and Raja Shankar Shah and Kunwar Raghunath Shah Freedom Fighter Museum in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh -- have been inaugurated so far.

"The committee would like to underline the slow progress in construction of the remaining 8 museums, as they were sanctioned far back in 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20, such as in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Gujarat and Mizoram which are yet to be completed," the panel said.

It also said that the museums planned for Kerala, Manipur and Goa in 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2020-21, respectively, are "still at the DPR stage even after the lapse of several years".

The committee also raised concerns about many Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) operating from rented buildings.

Works for the museums planned for Kerala, Manipur and Goa were yet to begin **PHOTO: SALAR**

The central government had set a target of building 728 EMRSs to provide quality education to tribal children from Class 6 to 12 in remote areas and help them compete on an equal footing with others. For 2025-26, Rs 7,088.60 crore was allocated to the EMRS scheme which is 47 per cent of the ministry's budget. The panel found that of the budgeted Rs 5,943 crore in 2023-24 and Rs 6,399 crore in 2024-25, only Rs 2,471.81 crore and Rs 4,748.92 crore had been used. *—PTI*

Kharge flays PM Modi govt's 'Make in India' scheme

NEW DELHI, 22 MARCH

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge accused the Modi government of failing to deliver on its 'Make in India' initiative, claiming its promise of establishing India as a global manufacturing hub is yet to materialise. In a post on X, Kharge stated, "Modi Govt's 'Make in India' is a classic case of giving importance to publicity rather than delivery. None of the ten promises made in the 2014 Manifesto have been fulfilled."

Kharge, cited a "massive decline" in employment in manufacturing and the sector's contribution to GDP. He claimed that public sector undertakings are being privatised, and bureaucratic obstacles are hindering growth, leading entrepreneurs to set up businesses abroad.

Kharge posed two questions: "Has the Modi Govt wound up the Phase 1 of the much-hyped PLI Scheme? Why has the share of merchandise in total exports reached its lowest level in 50 years under the Modi government?" *—PTI*

UP priest charged for abusive remarks against police

GHAZIABAD, 22 MARCH

Controversial priest Yati Narsinghanand Giri has been booked for spreading hate and abusing top police officers of the district in a video, officials said. The Dasna Devi Temple priest has been accused of making derogatory remarks against Mahatma Gandhi and using words intended to incite religious sentiments. The complainant claimed that Narsinghanand used abusive language against Ghaziabad police commissioner and the assistant police commissioner of Loni in a video. *—PTI*

India, Italy hold talks to expand military ties

NEW DELHI, 22 MARCH

India and Italy held a two-day meeting in Rome, focusing on ways to expand their military cooperation, including in areas of capability development, defence ministry said on Saturday.

"Key agenda points included enhanced exchange programmes, capability development efforts and strengthening collaboration between the Indian and Italian armed forces," the ministry said.

"The meeting also reviewed ongoing defence engagements, assessing their progress and exploring ways to optimise future interactions," it added.

Deliberations to boost bilateral defence ties came four months after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni unveiled a five-year strategic action plan to significantly expand cooperation between the two countries in certain key areas, including defence and security.

The action plan was released following talks between the two Prime Ministers in Brazil's Rio de Janeiro in November on sidelines of the G20 Summit. *—PTI*

Man kills self live on Insta; blames wife, mom-in-law

REWA, 22 MARCH

A man in Madhya Pradesh's Rewa district died by suicide during an Instagram live session, blaming his wife and mother-in-law, following which police arrested the two women, an official said on Saturday. Shiv Prakash Tripathi took the extreme step on 16 March, which was witnessed by his wife, Priya Sharma, said Sub Divisional Officer of Police Umesh Prajapati. Prajapatisaid the man married Sharma two years ago. After some time, he apparently learnt that his wife was in a relationship with another person. Meanwhile, he was badly injured in an accident following which his wife left for her parents' house, the official said. In the Instagram clip, the man says he would be ending his life because of his mother-in-law and wife. —*PTI*

'Cash' at Delhi HC judge's home from a 2018 CBI probe

Delhi Chief Justice submits in-house report to CJI

NEW DELHI, 22 MARCH

Delhi High Court Judge Justice Yashwant Varma is facing intense scrutiny after cash was allegedly found at his house following a fire incident, with reports now suggesting that the money is from a 2018 CBI probe.

Justice Varma was allegedly linked to an investigation linked to Simbhaoli Sugar Mill. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had launched a probe into the company following a complaint from the Oriental Bank of Commerce in February 2018. The bank alleged that the company misappropriated a Rs 97.85 crore loan intended for farmers, diverting the funds for other purposes.

Justice Varma, who served as non-executive director - Simbhaoli Sugars, was named as accused number 10 in the financial fraud case.

Yashwant Varma PHOTO: PTI

The cash was allegedly found at Justice Varma's residence by fire officials after a fire at his residence. The Supreme Court collegium then swiftly began the proceedings to transfer him to the Allahabad High Court and launched an inquiry into the matter. Shortly after that however, the collegium issued a statement saying that transfer was independent from the inquiry, and that there was a lot of misinformation around the matter. Fire officials too issued a statement claiming that no cash was found at the residence.

- The cash allegedly found at Justice Varma's residence may be linked to a 2018 CBI case against Simbhaoli Sugar Mill, where he was one of the accused

Meanwhile, Delhi High Court Chief Justice DK Updhyay is stated to have submitted a report to Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna in connection with the incident. Justice Upadhyay had commenced the in-house enquiry procedure collecting evidence and information in the incident and submitted his report on Friday.

The apex court collegium will examine the report and may initiate further action.

Upon receiving the information, the apex court said Justice Upadhyaya "commenced the in-house enquiry procedure collecting evidence and information".

Justice Upadhyaya was later said to have commenced the enquiry prior to the collegium meeting on 20 March. —*PTI/Agencies*

'HEALING TOUCH'

SC delegation says Manipur's tough phase will soon end

CHURACHANDPUR, 22 MARCH

Justice BR Gavai, leading a delegation of Supreme Court judges, said the difficult phase for Manipur will soon be over. He urged the citizens of Manipur to unite in the pursuit of peace amid ongoing ethnic strife.

The delegation, which included judges Vikram Nath, MM Sundresh, and KV Vishwanathan, visited a relief camp in Churachandpur and engaged with internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Justice Gavai addressed the gathering, saying "Our country is a true example of unity in diversity. India is home for all of us.

"We know that you all are going through a difficult phase but with the assistance of everyone, the executive, the legislature and the judiciary, this phase will be over in a short period," he added.

The Supreme Court delegation virtually inaugurated a legal services camp, a medical camp, and a legal aid clinic during their visit.

Additionally, Gavai announced that the National Legal Services Authority, of which he is the executive chairman, has allocated Rs 2.5 crore for relief materials for IDPs, building on the Rs 1.5 crore provided earlier.

Justice N Kotiswar Singh, part of the delegation hoped the visit would provide a "healing touch" to the state. Justice Singh, who belongs to the Meiti community did not visit Churachandpur distrtict amid objections from a lawyers' body there. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

CBI launches probe into ₹9K cr Noida sports city scam

NEW DELHI, 22 MARCH

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has initiated investigations into alleged irregularities surrounding the allotment and development of Sports City projects in Noida, which reportedly led to a Rs 9,000 crore scam between 2011 and 2014. The agency filed a FIRs against real estate firms Logix Infra Developers Pvt Ltd, Xanadu Estates Pvt Ltd, and Lotus Green Constructions Pvt Ltd, along with their directors and unnamed officials from Noida Authority. The ambitious Noida Sports City Project was designed to provide world-class sporting facilities alongside residential and commercial areas in sectors 78, 79, and 150. Allegations suggest that after the allotment of these projects, multiple violations of related conditions occurred. —*PTI*

Woman bites off husband's tongue in R'than

KOTA, 22 MARCH

In a shocking incident, a woman in Bakani town, Jhalawar district, allegedly bit off part of her husband's tongue during a violent domestic dispute. Ravina Sain, 23, has been charged with causing bodily harm and grievous injuries under sections 115(2) and 118(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. The altercation with her husband, Kanhayalal Sain, 25, escalated late on Thursday night, leading to the horrific act in a fit of rage. Family members rushed Kanhayalal to a local hospital before he was transferred to Jhalawar medical college for further treatment, where doctors informed them that the tongue could be reattached. Following the incident, Ravina attempted to harm herself but was persuaded to seek help. A case has been registered based on a complaint from Kanhayalal's brother. —*PTI*

Hindi writer Shukla selected for 59th Jnanpith Award

NEW DELHI, 22 MARCH

Eminent Hindi writer Vinod Kumar Shukla was on Saturday named the recipient of the 59th Jnanpith Award, India's highest literary honour. He will be the first writer from Chhattisgarh to receive the award. The 88-year-old short story writer, poet and essayist, considered one of the greatest contemporary writers in the language, is the 12th Hindi writer to receive the award. The award carries with it a cash reward of Rs 11 lakh, a bronze statue of Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of learning, and a citation. The decision was made during the meeting of the Jnanpith Selection Committee, chaired by eminent storyteller and Jnanpith awardee Pratibha Ray. The Jnanpith Award, instituted in the year 1961, is awarded only to Indian authors. —*PTI*

U'khand board urges transfer of students from illegal madrasas

DEHRADUN, 22 MARCH

The Uttarakhand Madrassa Education Board has raised concerns regarding the future of children enrolled in illegal madrasas recently shut down by the state government. These institutions were found to be operating without proper affiliation and documentation.

Mufti Shamoon Kasmi, Chairman of the Board, indicated that a formal letter will soon be dispatched to district magistrates (DMs) urging them to facilitate the transfer of affected students to recognised madrasas.

"While the closure of illegal madrasas is justifiable, the future of these children must not be compromised," he stated.

Approximately 100 illegal madrasas across five districts—Dehradun, Haridwar, Pauri, Nainital, and Udham Singh Nagar—have been sealed following a verification drive by the government. However, Kasmi noted that the number of students affected is minimal, as many parents are wary of sending their children to such establishments.

Approximately 100 illegal madrasas were closed across five districts in the Uttarakhand PHOTO: PTI

The Board recently recognised 49 madrasas and renewed the affiliation of 47 others, emphasising that compliance with legal norms is essential for madrasa operators. Kasmi stressed that the government's actions are not aimed at any specific community but rather focused on ensuring quality education. —*PTI*

Autopsy shows savagery of Meerut Merchant Navy officer killing

MEERUT, 22 MARCH

The post-mortem of former Merchant Navy officer Saurabh Rajput revealed the extreme brutality with which he was killed and the body dismembered allegedly by his wife Muskan Rastogi and her lover Sahil Shukla.

His head was severed from the body, both hands were cut off from the wrist and his legs were bent backwards, suggesting an attempt to fit the body in a drum, the autopsy report disclosed. The cause of death has been attributed to shock and excessive bleeding.

"His neck was severed and both palms were cut off. The body was cut up into four pieces to fit it in the drum," Superintendent of Police (City) Ayush Vikram Singh said.

The medical team further detailed the gruesome attempt to conceal the body.

The deceased's head was severed and his legs bent backwards and his hands were cut off PHOTO: PTI

"The body solidified in the cement and did not rot due to lack of air. The smell was not extremely foul," a member of the post-mortem team disclosed.

The drum had to be cut open and the hardened cement painstakingly removed to retrieve the body.

Meanwhile, Senior Superintendent of Police Vipin Tada told PTI that the police will prioritise filing a charge sheet in the case as quickly as possible.

"We will try to run the case in a fast-track court," he said. —*PTI*

The institute has referred the matter to its internal complaints committee for further investigation PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

NIT Silchar professor held on molestation charges

SILCHAR, 22 MARCH

An assistant professor at the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Silchar has been arrested for allegedly molesting a female student in Assam's Cachar district. The student lodged a complaint on Thursday, claiming the professor had summoned her to his office under the pretext of discussing her marks and requested she lock the door.

According to police, the professor was accused of molestation and sexual harassment. Following the incident, he was taken into custody and, after thorough questioning at the Ghungoor Police Outpost, was moved to the Silchar Sadar Police Station on Friday evening. Cachar Superintendent of Police, Numal Mahatta, confirmed the arrest. The institute has referred the matter to its internal complaints committee for further investigation, sealing the office where the alleged incident occurred. In response, students protested, demanding the professor's immediate dismissal. The institute responded promptly by suspending the accused and allowing police to record the student's statement and file a case against him. The professor has been with the institute since 2018. —*PTI*

Ex-servicemen protest in Punjab over assault of Colonel

CHANDIGARH, 22 MARCH

A protest was staged outside the Patiala deputy commissioner's office by the wife of Army Colonel Pushpinder Singh Bath, Jasvinder Kaur Bath, demanding justice for her husband and son who were allegedly assaulted by 12 Punjab police personnel.

The incident occurred on the night of 13 March, when Colonel Bath and his son were asked to move their car by police officers in civil dress. The Colonel's objection to their tone allegedly led to a brutal assault, resulting in a broken arm and a head injury.

A fresh FIR has been registered based on Colonel Bath's statement, and a Special Investigation Team (SIT) has been constituted to investigate the incident. The SIT comprises senior police officials, including SPS Parmar and Sandeep Malik.

BJP leader Preneet Kaur joined the protest, condemning the incident and demanding an impartial probe. She advocated for the inclusion of Army officials in the SIT, suggesting a joint investigation team with Army and police officials, as well as a judge, to ensure a fair investigation.

A Punjab police spokesperson said that Patiala Range DIG has been instructed to transfer the 12 police officers concerned. —*PTI*

ED arrests son-in-law of PACL promoter in ponzi scheme probe

NEW DELHI, 22 MARCH

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested Harsatinder Pal Singh Hayer, the son-in-law of the late Nirmal Singh Bhangoo, promoter of PACL Ltd, as part of its investigation into a massive money-laundering case linked to an alleged Rs 48,000 crore Ponzi scheme that duped numerous investors. Hayer was taken into custody on Friday and subsequently remanded to ED custody by a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court.

The case, initiated in 2015, follows a CBI FIR alleging that PACL and its associates operated fraudulent investment schemes.

Nirmal Singh Bhangoo PHOTO: X

The ED claims Hayer was a director in various PACL associate companies, including Australian entities Pearls Australasia Pty Ltd and Australasia Mirage I-Pty Ltd. It accuses him of diverting Rs 657.18 crore of proceeds of crime to these companies, which subsequently invested in real estate in Australia.

The agency has attached assets worth Rs 706 crore, including properties valued at Rs 462 crore in Australia, and has filed two chargesheets against Bhangoo and others. The asset details have been shared with the Justice Lodha Committee for the restitution process to affected investors. Bhangoo passed away in August 2022. —*PTI*

Tribal activists protest Ranchi flyover construction

RANCHI, 22 MARCH

Activists from various tribal organisations took to the streets on Saturday morning, initiating an 18-hour bandh in Jharkhand's capital, Ranchi, to protest against the construction of a flyover near the Sarna Sthal, a sacred site for tribal communities.

The activists are demanding the removal of a ramp being constructed in Siram Toli, arguing that it obstructs access to the religious site, which they said hosts their most significant tribal festival, during Sarhul. —*PTI*

SIGNS OF PROGRESS

Child labour drops in agarbatti industry: NGOs

NEW DELHI, 22 MARCH

A new study by a coalition of child rights NGOs claimed that child labour in India's incense stick (agarbatti) manufacturing industry has found a significant decline in the employment of underage workers.

The research, conducted across Bihar, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh, highlighted progress in eradicating child labour from the sector. However, concerns were raised regarding children engaged in home-based work under unregulated conditions.

The study, undertaken by the Just Rights for Children Alliance in collaboration with multiple NGOs, revealed that 82 per cent of respondents did not witness any child labour in their localities.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Only 8 per cent reported seeing children engaged in agarbatti manufacturing, with a total of 31 children identified across the surveyed states – 13 in Andhra Pradesh and 18 in Karnataka."The incense stick industry has made remarkable progress in eliminating child labour, thanks to heightened awareness, policy interventions and stricter regulations. However, we must remain vigilant, as pockets of child labour persist, particularly in home-based settings," the report stated.

According to the findings, 77 per cent of the observed child labourers worked in home-based production rather than formal workshops, making regulation and monitoring more challenging. Additionally, 85 per cent of these children were engaged in packaging agarbatti, a task requiring minimal skill but drawing vulnerable children into the workforce.

About 92 per cent of them reported working between five to eight hours daily, with 77 per cent earning less than Rs 5,000 per month.

The study surveyed a total of 153 respondents across three states, selected based on literature review and local NGO insights. —*PTI*

Odisha recorded 3 child marriages a day since '19

BHUBANESWAR, 22 MARCH

Odisha has reported an alarming average of three child marriages daily over the past six years, with Nabarangpur district recording the highest number of cases. According to government data, 8,159 child marriages took place across the state from 2019 to February, 2025 .

Nabarangpur district accounted for 1,347 cases, followed by Ganjam with 966 cases, and Koraput with 636 cases. Activists attribute this trend to tribal practices, dowry, migration of labourer families, and parents' fear that their daughters may elope.

Social activist Namrata Chadha emphasized that creating a supportive environment and society is crucial in preventing child marriages. The Odisha government has been organizing awareness campaigns and designating officials to report and prevent such incidents.

Despite these efforts, the state still grapples with the challenge of child labour, with 328 children rescued from working as labourers over the past six years. The government has also launched initiatives to empower girls through education and vocational training. Child marriages remain a significant concern in Odisha, and sustained efforts are needed to address the root causes and protect the rights of children. —*PTI*

S KOREA BACKS IMPEACHED YOON

Supporters of impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol rally to oppose his impeachment in Seoul, South Korea. ***PHOTO: PTI***

Kerala fishermen up in arms against deep-sea mining

"They can bring in the navy or even the army, but we will not allow sea mining off our shore. This is a matter of life and death for us, and we will not let anyone take away our livelihood," Robin said passionately about their stance on the Union government's proposed deep-sea sand mining.

The fishermen in Kerala have already launched several protests against the proposed plan to open up the sea to private mining companies as part of the Union Government's 'Blue Economy' initiative.

All the fishermen's associations stand united in their protests against this proposal, alleging that it would bring an end to the fisheries sector in the country, not only in the Arabian Sea but also in the Bay of Bengal.

"The mining, according to the scientific report we have, can disturb the seabed and completely destroy fish spawning habitats. It can also release poisonous gases trapped on the deep-sea floor, causing severe environmental issues," Kerala Minister for Fisheries, Saji Cherian, told PTI.

He said that deep-sea mining requires huge investments and heavy machinery, meaning only multinational corporations will be involved, making these areas completely inaccessible to poor fishermen.

The Kerala government, which is strongly opposing this project, passed a resolution in the Assembly urging the Centre to withdraw it.

The Minister said the proposed site, off the Kollam shore in Kerala in the Arabian Sea, is very rich in marine resources and serves as a lifeline for fishermen from Kerala and other states.

"We have a highly diverse and extensive fish population in this area. The mining will completely wipe out this habitat, severely affecting the livelihood of fishermen in our region," Saji Cherian said.

The fishermen in Kerala have already launched several protests ***PHOTO: PTI***

Experts have warned that Kerala's coastline is already severely affected by the impacts of climate change, with the Arabian Sea warming rapidly, leading to more cyclone formations and fewer working days at sea for fishermen.

"If ocean temperatures exceed 28 degrees Celsius, they support strong weather activities such as cyclones. Until recently, the Arabian Sea temperatures were below 28 degrees Celsius, but now they have increased by more than 1 degree Celsius, making the region more conducive to cyclonic formations," a scientist at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology told PTI.

The fishermen believe that, under the present circumstances, sea sand mining will sound a death knell for the fisheries off the Indian coast.

"Making changes to nature means disturbing the soil about one and a half feet below the surface, which is found along the Kollam coast. When this silt is removed, it disrupts the formation of a protective bank.

"The Kollam shore is home to a large fish population, and if this silt is removed, it will destroy the habitat that supports them. If that happens, we may no longer need the fisheries department, either at the state or the Centre," Robin, a fisherman from Kollam, added.

The fishermen say that the mining would not only impact fisheries in the sea but also adversely affect fish populations in inland water bodies, another vital source of steady income for the people of Kerala.

"We are organising fishermen across Kerala, regardless of political affiliations, to unite and protest against this. We will not allow them to remove a single grain of sand from our seas, even if we have to lay down our lives for it," Apton, another fisherman, said.

According to the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), systemic utilisation of our coastline can bring in wonderful economic benefits. Sea mining can have some impact on fisheries, but it would be minimal if conducted outside territorial waters, beyond 12 nautical miles, it says.

"Most of our fishing pressure occurs within territorial waters. We have three categories involved in fishing and related activities: traditional, motorised, and mechanised. Among these, only mechanised vessels tend to operate beyond 12 nautical miles," Dr Grinson George, Director of CMFRI, Kochi, told PTI.

He said various scientific agencies have closely studied the project and said this has been worked out after a lot of research and developmental activities.

"There were organisations that were looking closely at the seismic data that is coming from the Indian exclusive economic zone, to know what is happening to the resources in the coastal area.

"They were looking into oil and natural gas, gas hydrates, some people were looking on polymetallic nodules and organisations like Geological Survey of India were looking at the sand and minerals part of it also, and wanted to use these resources optimally and sustainably, to support the Blue Economy concept which is promoted by Government of India," Grinson George added.

Deep sea mining is the process of extracting minerals and other resources from the ocean floor using advanced machinery. *—PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salar@salar.news

SALAR سالار

Columbia varsity changes rules under Trump pressure

The US Ivy League school, Columbia University, agreed on Friday to implement an array of controversial policy changes, which includes the overhaul of the university's rules for protest and conducting a review of its Middle Eastern studies department.

The host of changes has been described as a crackdown on student protest and academic independence.

Columbia University agrees to ban face masks on campus

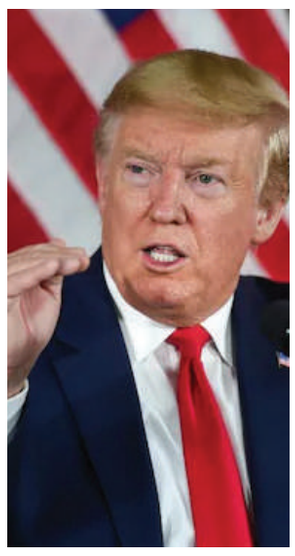
The university said it would place its Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies Department under "academic receivership for a minimum of five years," as demanded by President Donald Trump's administration.

Receivership means that someone from outside the department is appointed to take over running it. It is a rare step for universities and unprecedented as a demand from the US government.

The university also said it would forbid protests inside academic buildings and the use of face masks on campus "for the purpose of concealing one's identity," with an exception being made for masks worn for health reasons.

Further White House demands included the adoption of a new definition of antisemitism, abolishing its current process for disciplining students and coming up with a plan to "reform undergraduate admissions, international recruiting and graduate admission practices."

Columbia said it had agreed to fulfill many of the officials' demands.



Donald Trump ***PHOTO: PTI***

Why did Columbia agree to Trump's demands?

The changes came one week after the Trump administration said that for the university to continue receiving federal funding, worth some $400 million, it should implement those, and other, changes, also threatening to cut more.

The White House said the reason for the cuts is the university's handling of protests against Israel's war in Gaza, protests labeled by the White House as antisemitic.

The Trump administration's ultimatum has been widely condemned as an attack on academic freedom.

According to a letter sent by interim president Katrina Armstrong, the university would appoint a senior vice provost to conduct a review of its regional studies programs, "starting immediately with the Middle East," she wrote.

The move was met with condemnation as well as warnings that the threats against US academic institutions would increase.

"Columbia's capitulation endangers academic freedom and campus expression nationwide," Donna Lieberman, the executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, said in a statement.

Why is Trump targeting Palestinian protesters?

In recent weeks, Trump has taken aim at what he says are antisemitic and "anti-American" university pro-Palestinian protests over Israel's war against Hamas.

A spokesperson for the pro-Palestinian demonstrations, Columbia University graduate student Mahmoud Khalil, was arrested on 8 March by agents from the federal Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE).

The White House has accused Khalil of distributing "pro-Hamas propaganda" and is looking to deport him.

The Syrian-born Algerian citizen — who is a legal US resident and is married to a US citizen — appeared at a brief scheduling hearing on Friday in immigration court at a remote detention center in Louisiana.

Khalil's lawyers, who appeared via video link, requested more time to review and prepare for the case.

The judge set the next hearing for 8 April.

His attorneys are also challenging his detention and potential deportation in the federal court system. Khalil said this week that his "unjust detention is indicative of [...] anti-Palestinian racism" in the US. *—DW News*

In recent weeks, Trump has taken aim at what he says are antisemitic and anti-American university pro-Palestinian protests over Israel's war against Hamas ***PHOTO: PTI***

Dump of JFK records reveals CIA secrets & some personal data

History buffs dove into thousands of pages of government records released online this week, hoping for new nuggets about President John F Kennedy's assassination. They instead found revelations about US espionage in the massive document dump that also exposed some previously redacted personal information.

The US National Archives and Records Administration posted more than 63,000 pages of records on its website, following an executive order from President Donald Trump. Many of the documents had been released previously but with redactions that hid the names of CIA sources or details about its spying and covert operations in the 1960s.

Kennedy was killed on 23 November, 1963, during a visit to Dallas. As his motorcade finished its parade route downtown, shots rang out from the Texas School Book Depository building. Police arrested Lee Harvey Oswald, who had positioned himself from a sniper's perch on the sixth floor. Two days later, night club owner Jack Ruby fatally shot Oswald during a jail transfer broadcast live on television.

The latest release of documents pumped new energy into conspiracy theories about the assassination. Kennedy scholars said they haven't seen anything out of line with the conclusion that Oswald, a 24-year-old ex-Marine, was the lone gunman.

"The chase for the truth will go on forever, I suspect," said Philip Shenon, who wrote a 2013 book about the killing of JFK.

It's a big document dump, but it doesn't include everything

The vast majority of the National Archives' collection of more than 6 million related pages of records, photographs, motion pictures, sound recordings and artifacts had already been released before the archives posted about 2,200 files online this week.

Writers, historians and conspiracy promoters have spent decades pushing for the release of all the records. In the early 1990s, the federal government mandated that all assassination-related documents be housed in a single collection in the National Archives and Records Administration. The collection was required to be opened by 2017, barring any exemptions designated by the president.

According to researchers and the FBI, roughly 3,700 files held by federal authorities still haven't been released.

President John F Kennedy waves from his car in a motorcade approximately one minute before he was shot on 22 November, 1963, in Dallas. Riding with President Kennedy are first lady Jacqueline Kennedy, right, Nellie Connally, second from left, and her husband, Texas Gov. John Connally, far left. ***PHOTO: PTI***

Trump's order also called for declassifying the remaining federal records related to the 1968 assassinations of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Scholars describe a chaotic release

Scholars and history buffs described the latest release as rushed and expressed frustration that going through the files one by one represented a random search for unreleased information.

"We've all heard the reports about the lawyers staying up all night, which I believe, because there's there's a lot of sloppiness in this," said Larry Sabato, director of the University of Virginia Center for Politics and author of "The Kennedy Half-Century."

Scholars and history buffs grumbled that, unlike past releases, the National Archives didn't provide an index or workable search tool. Also, the files included material generated after the 1960s, and some people listed in the records were angry to find out that sensitive information about them was revealed, including Social Security numbers.

They include Joseph diGenova, a former campaign lawyer for Trump. His personal information was on documents relating to his work for a U.S. Senate select committee that investigated abuses of power by government officials in the 1970s, including the surveillance of US citizens.

He is planning to sue the US National Archives and Records Administration for violating privacy laws.

"I think it's the result of incompetent people doing the reviewing," he said. "The people who reviewed these documents did not do their job."

White House officials said a plan was in place to help those whose personal information was disclosed, including credit monitoring, until new Social Security numbers are issued. Officials are still screening the records to identify all the Social Security numbers that were released.

New details about covert CIA operations

The latest release represented a boon to mainstream historians, particularly those researching international relations, the Cold War and the activities of the CIA.

One revelation was that a key adviser warned President Kennedy after the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961 that the CIA had grown too powerful. The aide proposed giving the State Department control of "all clandestine activities" and breaking up the CIA.

The page of Special Assistant Arthur Schlesinger Jr's memo outlining the proposal had not been released before. A previous release of part of his memo redacted Schlesinger's statement that 47% of the political officers in U.S. embassies were controlled by the CIA.

Schlesinger's plan never came to fruition.

Timothy Naftali, an adjunct professor at Columbia University who is writing a book about JFK's presidency, said scholars likely now have more details about US intelligence activities under Kennedy than under any other president.

"It's quite remarkable to be able to walk through that secret world," he said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Woman drowns dog in airport after denied boarding

ORLANDO, 22 MARCH

A woman drowned her dog in a Florida airport bathroom and then boarded her international flight after she was prevented from bringing the white miniature schnauzer with her because of a paperwork issue, authorities said. The woman was arrested in Lake County on Wednesday on a charge of aggravated animal abuse, a third-degree felony. She was released on USD 5,000 bail. The investigation into the death of the 9-year-old schnauzer named Tywinn started in December when a janitor found the dog in a trash bag in a bathroom stall along with pet supplies and a bone-shaped dog tag with the woman's name and phone number, at Orlando International Airport. According to the US Department of Agriculture, dogs travelling from the US to Colombia must be accompanied by a veterinarian-is-

PHOTO: X

Andrew Tate arrives in Romania after weeks in US

BUCHAREST, 22 MARCH

After weeks in the United States, influencer brothers Andrew and Tristan Tate arrived early Saturday back in Romania, where they face charges of human trafficking and forming a criminal gang to sexually exploit women. The brothers' plane landed at Bucharest Henri Coanda International Airport shortly before 11.00pm Friday. After arriving at their residence near the capital, Bucharest, Andrew Tate told reporters they returned because "innocent men don't run from anything" and he vowed to clear his name in court. Their return to Romania comes nearly a month after a travel ban imposed on the brothers was lifted, after which they flew on a private jet to the US, landing in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The brothers remain under judicial control, which requires them to appear before judicial authorities in Romania when summoned. *—PTI*

Lift ban on girl's edu in Afghan: UNICEF to Taliban

ISLAMABAD, 22 MARCH

The UN children's agency on Saturday urged Afghanistan's Taliban rulers to immediately lift a lingering ban on girls' education to save the future of millions who have been deprived of their right to education since the Taliban returned to power in 2021. The appeal by UNICEF comes as a new school year began in Afghanistan without girls beyond sixth grade. The ban, said the agency, has deprived 400,000 more girls of their right to education, bringing the total to 2.2 million. Afghanistan is the only country in the world that bans female secondary and higher education, with the Taliban justifying the ban saying it doesn't comply with their interpretation of Sharia, or Islamic law. Catherine Russell, UNICEF executive director, said in a statement. "All girls must be allowed to return to school now. If these capable, bright young girls continue to be denied an education, then the repercussions will last for generations." Russell warned that the decline in female doctors and midwives will leave women and girls without crucial medical care. This situation is projected to result in an estimated 1,600 additional maternal deaths and over 3,500 infant deaths. The Afghan Taliban government earlier this year skipped a Pakistan-hosted global conference where Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai condemned the state of women's and girls' rights in Afghanistan as gender apartheid. *—PTI*

US revokes temporary status for 5L immigrants

Citizens from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, Venezuela will soon be deported

MIAMI, 22 MARCH

The United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has announced it will revoke legal protections for approximately 5,32,000 individuals from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, potentially exposing them to deportation by 24 April. The affected migrants entered the US since October 2022 under a humanitarian parole programme, having arrived with financial sponsors and been granted two-year permits to live and work in the country.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem stated that the new policy follows an earlier Trump administration effort to curb what was termed the "broad abuse" of the humanitarian parole system, a tool used to allow those from conflict-affected countries temporary residence.

Previously, these individuals could remain in the US until their parole expired; however, the administration has halted processing applications for asylum and other visa requests that could extend their stay. This decision has already faced legal challenges, with lawsuits seeking to reinstate the programme for the affected nationalities.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration has terminated a vital contract with the Acacia Center for Justice, which provided legal assistance to unaccompanied migrant children. This cessation leaves an estimated 26,000 minors without legal representation while navigating a complex court system. Advocates express deep concern over the implications for vulnerable children who now face the legal process alone.

The evolving immigration policies signal ongoing challenges for both migrants and the legal support systems in place, drawing attention to the precarious situations faced by many refugees and asylum seekers in the US. *—PTI*

Trump to cover Sunita's overtime

US President Donald Trump has pledged to personally cover the overtime pay for astronauts Barry "Butch" Wilmore and Sunita "Suni" Williams, who recently returned from a nine-month stint in space. Initially scheduled for an eight-day mission, the pair spent 286 days in orbit due to a malfunctioning spacecraft. Trump responded to a Fox News reporter's inquiry regarding the astronauts' per diem—totalling around USD 1,430—by stating, "If I have to, I'll pay it out of my own pocket."

CANADIAN PM SAYS AMERICANS WILL SUFFER FROM TRADE WAR

TORONTO, 22 MARCH

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney has asserted that US President Donald Trump will ultimately recognise Canada's sovereignty and engage in substantive trade discussions amidst the ongoing trade war. Carney declared that negotiations won't commence "until we get the respect we deserve as a sovereign nation." Trump has frequently attacked Canada, recently suggesting it should become the 51st state. Carney, addressing provincial leaders in Ottawa, announced relief packages for workers and businesses affected by tariffs, while emphasising the need for extensive discussions regarding trade and security. With Trump imposing 25 per cent tariffs on steel and aluminium, and threatening further tariffs on Canadian products, Carney expressed confidence that consequences of these actions would prompt a dialogue built on mutual respect. He also revealed plans to expedite resource projects and develop a national trade corridor, highlighting the need for a pipeline to transport oil from Alberta to Canada. *—PTI*

Israel destroys Gaza's only cancer hospital

JERUSALEM, 22 MARCH

Israeli forces have intensified their military operations in the Gaza Strip, including the destruction of the Turkish-Palestinian Friendship Hospital, which had served as a crucial care facility for cancer patients. This comes as Israeli leaders vow to expand territorial control until Hamas releases its remaining 59 hostages.

The hospital, located in the Netzarim Corridor, was reportedly used by Hamas militants, leading Israel to designate it as a legitimate military target. Dr. Zaki Al-Zaqzouq, head of its oncology department, condemned the bombing, expressing disbelief at the loss of a vital medical resource. Turkey's Foreign Ministry has condemned Israel's actions, accusing it of making Gaza "uninhabitable."

Israel's Defence Minister, Israel Katz, warned of raising military operations' intensity until the hostages are freed, stating that Hamas's refusal would result in greater territorial losses. Recent strikes targeted areas in northern and southern Gaza, resulting in civilian casualties, including a family of four.

The ongoing conflict has claimed around 600 Palestinian lives since a ceasefire collapsed, while Israeli military operations resumed, citing the need to pressure Hamas. Since the outbreak of hostilities on 7 October 2023, an estimated 49,000 Palestinians have died, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, with Israeli forces claiming about 20,000 of them as militants. *—PTI*

Displaced Palestinians relocate from the areas where the Israeli army is operating after Israel's renewed attack in Gaza **PHOTO: PTI**

44 civilians killed in jihadi attack in Niger

DAKAR, 22 MARCH

At least 44 civilians were killed in a brutal attack by suspected jihadists in western Niger, the country's Interior Ministry confirmed.

The attack occurred Friday afternoon in the village of Fambita, near the borders with Mali and Burkina Faso. The ministry blamed the assault on the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (EIGS).

"At around 2 pm, as Muslim worshippers gathered for Friday prayers, heavily armed terrorists surrounded the mosque and carried out a massacre of rare cruelty," the statement read. The attackers also torched a market and homes before retreating.

At least 13 people were severely injured, and the government has declared three days of national mourning.

For over a decade, Niger and its neighbours, Burkina Faso and Mali, have battled jihadist insurgencies linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State. Following recent military coups, the ruling juntas expelled French forces and sought security support from Russian mercenaries.

The three nations have since formed the Alliance of Sahel States to bolster regional security. However, analysts warn that violence has surged under military rule, with record-high attacks on civilians by both jihadists and government forces. *—PTI*

3 killed in Russian attacks on Ukraine despite limited truce

Ukrainian air force reported that Russia fired 179 exploding drones and decoys in the latest wave of attacks overnight into Saturday **PHOTO: X**

KYIV, 22 MARCH

Three people were killed and 12 wounded in a Russian drone attack on the Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia, Ukrainian officials said on Saturday, in an attack that underlined Moscow's intention to continue aerial strikes despite agreeing to a limited ceasefire.

Regional head Ivan Fedorov said that "residential buildings, private cars, and social infrastructure facilities were set on fire" in the attack Friday night, and published photos showing emergency services scouring the rubble of damaged residential buildings for survivors.

The Ukrainian air force reported that Russia fired 179 exploding drones and decoys in the latest wave of attacks overnight into Saturday. It said 100 were intercepted and another 63 "lost", likely having been electronically jammed.

Officials in the Kyiv and Dnipropetrovsk regions also reported fires breaking out due to the falling debris from intercepted drones. Russia's Ministry of Defence, meanwhile, said its air defense systems shot down 47 Ukrainian drones. *—PTI*

N Korean leader reaffirms support for Russia's war

SEOUL, 22 MARCH

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un expressed his unwavering support for Russia's war in Ukraine during a meeting with a top Russian security official in Pyongyang, North Korean state media said Saturday.

Friday's meeting between Kim and Sergei Shoigu, Russia's Security Council secretary, followed a South Korean intelligence assessment in late February that North Korea had likely sent additional troops to Russia after its forces suffered heavy casualties fighting in the Russian-Ukraine war. Ukraine and Russia agreed in principle Wednesday to a limited ceasefire after US President Donald Trump spoke with the two countries' leaders, though it remains to be seen when it might take effect and what targets would be off-limits. *—PTI*

TURKEY PROTESTS AGAINST PREZ

Police officers use pepper spray during clashes with people as they protest against the arrest of Istanbul's Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu in Istanbul, Turkey **PHOTO: PTI**

Japan, China, South Korea hold talks

TOKYO, 22 MARCH

Foreign ministers from Japan and its two neighbouring Asian powers China and South Korea held a meeting on Saturday to seek common ground on areas like low birth rates, natural disasters and cultural exchanges at a time of growing tensions.

The three-way meetings are an accomplishment for Japan, which has historical and territorial disputes with both China and South Korea. An earlier trilateral meeting was held in South Korea last year.

In his opening remarks, Japanese Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya told his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi and South Korea's Cho Tae-yul that their cooperation is especially important as the world faces tension and divisions.

They were also to discuss North Korea's missile and nuclear development, Russia's war on Ukraine and other regional and global issues.

On Friday, the three foreign ministers met with Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, he said that cooperation among the three countries will serve their national interest. *—PTI*

FIRE STALLS OPERATION

Flights resume at Heathrow after daylong closure

LONDON, 22 MARCH

Heathrow Airport has declared itself "fully operational" following a near day-long closure caused by a fire at an electrical substation. However, airlines have warned that significant disruption will persist for days as they work to reschedule flights and reposition aircraft and crews.

The sudden closure, which stranded around 200,000 passengers and resulted in more than 1,300 flight cancellations, has raised questions about why such a critical infrastructure facility could be brought to a standstill by what appears to be an accidental blaze.

In a statement, Heathrow announced it had deployed hundreds of additional staff to assist passengers and had added flights to accommodate an extra 10,000 travellers on Saturday. British Airways, the airport's largest airline, plans to run approximately 85 per cent of its scheduled flights today. Witnesses near the substation reported hearing a loud explosion followed by a fireball and thick smoke as the blaze, which took seven hours to bring under control, cut power to the airport and over 60,000 local residences. Authorities have deemed the fire non-suspicious, with investigations focusing on the electrical equipment involved.

Passengers on roughly 120 flights that were airborne at the time of the shutdown were diverted to various airports. Mark Doherty, whose flight from New York to Heathrow was turned back mid-air, expressed frustration over the lack of contingency plans, stating, "There's no back-up plan for something like this.". *—PTI*

A British Airways plane takes off as Heathrow Airport slowly resumes flights in London on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

The military is now expected to move on Khartoum International Airport **PHOTO: X**

SUDAN ARMY SEIZES KHARTOUM

CAIRO, 22 MARCH

Sudan's military has tightened its grip on Khartoum, reclaiming key government sites from the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). On Saturday, troops expelled RSF fighters from the National Intelligence Service headquarters and the Corinthia Hotel, a day after seizing the Republican Palace.

Friday's capture of the Republican Palace, the government's pre-war seat, was a symbolic victory for the military.

The military is now expected to move on Khartoum International Airport. The war has killed over 28,000 people and triggered a humanitarian catastrophe, with famine and atrocities gripping the nation. *—PTI*

HZL plans 4MLD water treatment plant in Rajasthan

UDAIPUR, 22 MARCH

Hindustan Zinc Limited (HZL) recycled more than 18B litres of water in the 2023–24 financial year, which is roughly the equivalent of the annual water usage of nearly 1 lakh households in Raastan, the company said on Saturday. On the occasion of World Water Day, it also announced that it would inaugurate a 4 million litres per day (MLD) Zero Liquid Discharge plant at Rampura Agucha in Bhilwara district next week. Rampura Agucha has the world's largest underground zinc mining operation. Its approach to water conservation encompasses operations and community-led water stewardship initiatives. "The company has maintained a zero liquid discharge stance. This new facility (at Rampura Agucha) further propels the company's vision of responsible water management," said Priya Agarwal Hebbar, the chairperson of HZL—*PTI*

Mizoram exports Anthurium flowers to Singapore

NEW DELHI, 22 MARCH

Anthurium flowers from Mizoram have been exported for the first time to Singapore, enhancing India's floriculture export potential, particularly from the Northeast. The flagging off of the first consignment of Anthurium flowers from Aizawl, Mizoram, to Singapore was held on February 26, 2025, the commerce ministry stated Saturday. The consignment, comprising 1,024 Anthurium cut flowers (weighing 70 kg) packed in 50 corrugated boxes, was exported by IVC Agrovet Pvt. Ltd. from Aizawl, Mizoram, to Singapore via Kolkata. The flowers were sourced from the Zo Anthurium Growers Cooperative Society, Aizawl, Mizoram, and imported by Veg Pro Singapore Pte. Ltd., marking a milestone in the region's floriculture export journey. Anthurium is one of the most important flowers cultivated in Mizoram, playing a vital role in driving local economic activity, particularly benefiting farmers, including women. —*PTI*

Omaxe to invest ₹400 crore in Faridabad

NEW DELHI, 22 MARCH

Real estate company Omaxe will invest Rs 400 crore to develop two new commercial projects in Faridabad, Haryana, to expand its business. These will be part of its 120-acre mixed-use development named World Street by Omaxe. The first commercial project New Singapore is spread over 11.6 acres, comprising 15 lakh square feet area of largely retail spaces, while the other project, Clarkee, covering nearly two acre, will be developed as party and nightlife destination. The projects are expected to be completed by 2029. The projects will be funded through internal accruals, Omaxe said. The company has launched around 700 units so far. Designed as Faridabad's ultimate nightlife destination, Clarkee will host 15+ nightclubs, bars, and restaurants —*PTI*

GI-tagged jaggery from UP exported to Bangladesh

NEW DELHI, 22 MARCH

A consignment of 30 tonnes of GI-tagged jaggery from Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh, has been shipped to Bangladesh, an official statement said on Saturday. Muzaffarnagar region is renowned for its high-quality sugarcane. Typically, Geographical Indication-tagging is primarily an indication of a agricultural, natural or manufactured product originating from a definite geographical territory. It conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, which is essentially attributable to the place of its origin. "This initiative marks the beginning of direct exports of jaggery from western UP to Bangladesh through Farmer Producer Organizations and Farmer Producer Companies," the statement said. —*PTI*

Musk reacts to Grok row in India with laugh emoji

The chatbot on X says Musk finds the controversy amusing

WASHINGTON, 22 MARCH

Elon Musk laughed off a controversy surrounding his AI chatbot Grok in India. After X's built in AI chatbot Grok kicked up a sandstorm earlier by using abuses in Hindi and providing controversial response to a range of social and political questions, thereby finding itself in government deliberation, Elon Musk responded with a laughing emoji.

Musk, who acquired the platform in 2022, posted a link to a BBC article titled 'Why Elon Musk's Grok is kicking up a storm in India,' with a laughing emoji on the platform.

Under his post, an individual tagged Grok and asked it to explain Elon Musk's post. "Elon Musk shared a BBC article about Grok causing a stir in India with its bold, unfiltered responses, like calling Rahul Gandhi more honest than PM Modi. Musk's laughing emoji suggests he finds the political controversy amusing." the AI chatbot replied.

Other users asked Grok who spreads the most disinformation on X, to which the chatbot replied "Research and AI analysis, including from Grok, suggest Elon Musk spreads the most disinformation on X. His posts, often unverified claims in politics and science, gain billions of views.

Studies highlight his role amplifying false narratives, interacting with pro-Russia accounts, and boosting far-right voices."

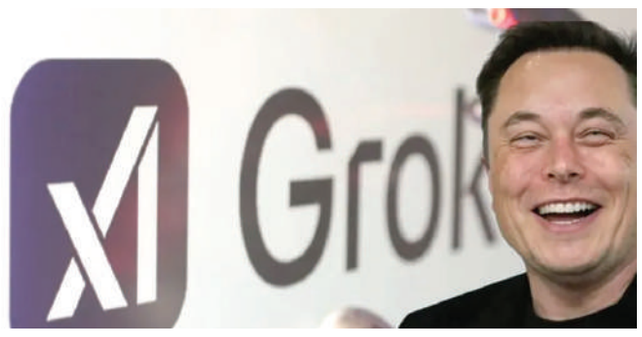


PHOTO: X

- Musk, who acquired X in 2022, posted a link to a BBC article titled 'Why Elon Musk's Grok is kicking up a storm in India,' with a laughing emoji on the platform

The controversy erupted when an Indian user had asked Grok to list their ten best mutual on X. When Grok took a moment to respond, the user began swearing at it. When Grok listen the user mutual, it added in a colourful barrage of swearwords in Hindi, before saying "I was just having fun, but lost control." The response went viral, with many users receiving similar responses. The issue entered the government's purview when users began asking it political questions, to which Grok responded that Rahul Gandhi is more "honest" than Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose speeches often feel "scripted". —*Agencies*

Twitter's bird sign sells for nearly $35,000

Twitter's iconic bird logo that was removed from the company's former San Francisco headquarters when Elon Musk rebranded it to X has sold for nearly USD 35,000. RR Auction, which deals in "rare and collectible items" said the 254 kg sign, which measured 12 feet by 9 feet, sold for USD 34,375. It did not name the buyer. Other tech history items that fetched sizable sums in the auction included an Apple-1 computer with accessories sold for USD 375,000, an Apple Computer Co. cheque signed by Steve Jobs in 1976 for USD 112,054 and a first-generation 4GB iPhone, sealed in its package, for USD 87,514. —*Agencies*

SMART INVESTMENT

PHOTO: X

Housing prices up 63–67% in two Bengaluru areas

NEW DELHI, 22 MARCH

Bengaluru's two key micro-markets – Thanisandra Main Road and Sarjapur Road – have witnessed 67 per cent and 63 per cent growth, respectively, in housing prices in the last three years, according to Anarock.

Real estate consultant Anarock's data showed that average housing prices at Sarjapur Road rose 63 per cent to Rs 9,850 per square feet at the end of 2024 from Rs 6,050 per square feet at 2021-end.

Thanisandra Main Road witnessed a 67 per cent growth to Rs 8,900 per square feet from Rs 5,345 per square feet.

The average monthly rental rose 76 per cent in Sarjapur Road to Rs 36,900 from Rs 21,000.

In Thanisandra Main Road, the average monthly rental growth went up 62 per cent to Rs 33,200 from Rs 20,500.

Commenting on the trend, Angad Bedi, the CMD of BCD Group, said Thanisandra Main Road and Sarjapur Road in Bengaluru exemplify the changing pattern of the real estate sector.

Property First founder and CEO Bhavesh Kothari said, "It seems to be a bull run for the residential real estate sector where more people are moving towards home ownership for primary use or rental income.

The rapid growth in capital and rental values is a factor of the growing importance of micro-markets in top cities as a commercial and residential hub, attracting significant attention from retail investors." —*PTI*

Firms with over $500M revenue adopting AI fast

NEW DELHI, 22 MARCH

Companies with at least 50 crore in annual revenue are adopting Artificial Intellignece (AI) more quickly than smaller organisations, according to a report by McKinsey.

"The companies with more than USD 500 million in annual revenues are using gen AI throughout more of their organisations than smaller companies are," the report says.

The report says that the organisations are beginning to create the structures and processes that lead to meaningful value from gen AI.

While still in the early days, companies are redesigning workflows, elevating governance and mitigating more risks, the report added.

The report adds that overall, the use of AI – that is, gen AI as well as analytical AI – continues to build momentum.

More than three-quarters of respondents now say that their organisations use AI in at least one business function, says the report.

PHOTO: X

The survey responses show that companies are most often using gen AI in marketing and sales, product and service development, service operations, and software engineering, it says

The survey findings also highlighted how organisations are structuring their AI deployment efforts.

The report highlights that for risk and compliance, as well as data governance, organisations often use a fully centralised model such as a centre of excellence. —*PTI*

AI KEY TO SME GROWTH IN INDIA: EXPERTS

NEW DELHI, 22 MARCH

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly evolving and continuously changing the landscape for India's small and medium enterprises (SMEs). It can boost their efficiency and growth, experts said at the Nasscom Global Confluence 2025 in New Delhi.

The event, designed to empower Indian technology companies for global success, witnessed the leaders discuss the roadmap of connected systems in the era of AI and its impact on SMEs in India.

The rise of AI technologies, particularly Agentic AI, presents a unique opportunity for SMEs to innovate and scale without the traditional constraints of workforce size and unlock new opportunities, they said. —*ANI*

GAME-CHANGER

PLI in telecom & networking generates ₹15K crore exports

NEW DELHI, 22 MARCH

The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for telecom and networking has generated export sales exceeding Rs 14,963 crore, driving significant growth in India's domestic telecom manufacturing sector.

Dr Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar, Minister of State for Communications And Rural Development said in Rajya Sabha that as of 31 January, 2025, beneficiaries of the scheme have invested Rs 4,081 crore, with total sales reaching Rs 78,672 crore, which includes Rs 14,963 crore in export sales.

Launched on 24 February, 2021, with an initial outlay of Rs 12,195 crore, the PLI scheme aims to bolster domestic manufacturing, reduce dependency on imports and promote innovation in the telecom and networking industry.

PHOTO: X

As per the reply of MoS, the PLI scheme has proven to be a game-changer for India's telecom manufacturing landscape as it has created over 26,351 new jobs in the sector.

In order to make the scheme successful, the government has amended the scheme's guidelines to encourage further growth and innovation in the sector, according to the MoS. These amendments include, 1 per cent additional incentive, expansion of approved products, flexibility in product additions, and quarterly incentive claims.

The Government has significantly increased budget allocations for key sectors under the PLI Scheme in 2025–26, reaffirming its commitment to strengthening domestic manufacturing —*ANI*

EV INSURANCE UP 16 TIMES IN 3 YEARS: REPORT

NEW DELHI, 22 MARCH

The demand for Electric vehicles (EVs) insurance has witnessed a significant upswing, with adoption growing a staggering 16 times in just three years, said according to the internal data of Policybazaar.

The private sector insurer said in a report that the share of insurance policies for EV cars, which stood at a mere 0.50 per cent in FY23, has expanded to 14 per cent in March 2025, standing at 8.2 per cent

Observing the evolving trends, Amit Chhabra, CBO of General Insurance at Policybazaar said, "The accelerating adoption of EV insurance signals India's shift toward sustainable mobility. With EV insurance share growing nearly 16-fold in just three years, consumers are not only adopting electric vehicles but also recognising the need for tailored protection."

The internal insurance sales data of the company suggest that bookings for the insured two-wheeler EVs accounted for 7-8 per cent of all two-wheeler insurance policies under five years. The company's data reveals that the percentage has more than doubled over the past year, with the number of policies increasing from 10,000 last year to 20,000 this year. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

STPI-supported startups raise ₹286 cr investment

NEW DELHI, 22 MARCH

State-run STPI-supported 134 startups have raised Rs 286 crore in funding from investors, a top official of the organisation said.

While speaking at an event, Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) Director General Arvind Kumar said the organisation, formed under the Next Generation Incubation Scheme (NGIS) of the Ministry of Electronics and IT, has given early-stage seed capital of Rs 30.87 crore to 136 startups and financially incentivised 359 others through a stipend amount of Rs 3.57 crore.

"Amongst these supported startups, 134 have also been able to raise external funding from an investor community comprising angels and venture capitalists of about Rs 286 crore, which is not only a validation of their business but also the testament of the progress made by these startups," Kumar said during the STPI Sangam event on Friday.

"I am proud to share that 44 per cent of STPI's startup portfolio consists of women entrepreneurs, many of whom come from Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities. We are not just honouring startup success stories today; we are also reflecting on how we can improve, refine our policies, expand our outreach, and ensure that our startup ecosystem reaches its full potential," Kumar said.

STPI is the oldest and biggest known incubator in the country. It was started to facilitate and support businesses of IT-ITes companies when the revenue was USD 20 million (about Rs 52 crore) in 1992-93.

Today, the revenue of the IT-ITes sector has crossed USD 250 million, of which USD 200 billion is from exports. —*PTI*

South, West India top in CSR spending: Report

NEW DELHI, 22 MARCH

South and West India have witnessed more Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) spending by the technology companies in India compared to other regions, with more companies spending beyond the mandate of 2 per cent, said a joint report by Nasscom and BOD Consulting.

The report added that the leading areas of spending for major tech companies are in education (38.4 per cent) followed by environment and climate change (25.5 percent) and skilling (16 per cent).

Education, Healthcare, Poverty Eradication-Hunger Malnutrition, Environment and Sustainability were the leading segments where projects were initiated by the tech industry, the report observed.

PHOTO: X

According to the report, about 83 per cent tech companies reported more than 2 per cent of their profits being allocated to CSR in FY23.

This was much higher than the 65 per cent reported for non-tech companies. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

TBO TEK SELLS 4.12% STAKE FOR ₹ 537CR

NEW DELHI, 22 MARCH

SBI Mutual Fund (MF), ICICI Prudential MF and Nippon India MF on Friday acquired a 4.12 per cent stake in travel distribution firm TBO Tek for Rs 537 crore through open market transactions.

TBO Tek is a technology platform engaged in the business of providing services related to tours and travel.

A total of 44.72 lakh shares, or 4.12 per cent stake, in TBO Tek were acquired by the three mutual fund houses in three separate transactions on the BSE.

As per the bulk deal data, Nippon India MF acquired 28.11 lakh shares in TBO Tek, SBI MF purchased 8.78 lakh shares, and ICICI Prudential MF picked up 7.83 lakh shares of the company.

The shares were purchased at an average price of Rs 1,200 apiece, taking the combined value to Rs 536.75 crore.

Meanwhile, Augusta TBO (Singapore) Pte and TBO Korea Holdings, two public shareholders, divested a 6.7 per cent stake in Gurugram-based TBO Tek for Rs 870 crore through open market transactions.

Augusta TBO (Singapore) offloaded 46.29 lakh shares or 4.3 per cent holding in TBO Tek, while TBO Korea Holdings sold 26.20 lakh scrips, amounting to a 2.42 per cent stake in the company, as per the data —*PTI*

EDUCATION—EXPECTATION GAP

83% of eng, biz graduates remain jobless

BANGALORE, 22 MARCH

A recent report by Unstop said that nearly 83 per cent of engineering graduates and 46 per cent of business school graduates remain jobless or without an internship offer. The study highlights the gap between the education system, the graduate's expectations and the job market.

According to the Unstop Talent Report 2025, released at the Unstop Talent Meet in Bangalore, the challenges faced by young professionals is compounded by significant shifts in hiring patterns. 73 per cent of the recruiters claimed the hired based on skill over degrees from premiere institutions.

PHOTO: X

The study was conducted on 30,000 GenZ professionals and 700 HR recruiters.

In a departure from the traditional approach to work, over 51 per cent of GenZ professionals, including 59 per cent of B-school students, seek multiple income streams through freelancing or other such side gigs. This finding highlights not only the work ethic, but also the fact that many believe that a single income stream is insufficient to balance modern costs.

This is further heightened in the gender pay gap, with two-thirds of female Arts & Science graduates earn less than rupees 6 LPA, while men in the same fields typically surpass this mark. However, B-schools and E-schools have achieved better pay parity.

The disconnect between hiring practices and expectations if further underscored with appraisal or feedback systems. 77 per cent of GenZ professionals prefer frequent performance reviews (monthly or project-based), whereas 71 per cent of recruiters still rely on annual or biannual evaluations. —*Agencies*

PHOTO: X

We support T20 leagues in new territories: Arun

NEW DELHI, 22 MARCH

Nearing two decades of existence, brand IPL has become stronger than ever and doesn't see any threat from the growing number of T20 leagues globally, its chairman Arun Dhumal said on Saturday as he steered clear of the speculation swirling around an event backed by Saudi Arabia.

Speaking to PTI as the league enters its 18th edition, Dhumal said the BCCI supports the rise in several T20 leagues globally, especially in unchartered territories like Saudi Arabia, Europe, and the USA. He feels the growth will eventually help the game ahead of the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics where cricket will be played.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Boxing legend George Foreman dies at 76

AUSTIN, 22 MARCH

George Foreman became the heavyweight champion of the world in his 20s, only to lose his belt to Muhammad Ali in perhaps the most memorable fight in boxing history. A full 20 years later in 1994, the 45-year-old Foreman became the oldest man to win the heavyweight championship, throwing one perfect combination to steal Michael Moorer's title in an epic upset. Few fighters ever had more big moments than Big George Foreman and even after he finally left the ring, he was only getting started. The fearsome heavyweight, who lost the "Rumble in the Jungle" to Ali before his inspiring second act as a surprising champion and a successful businessman, died Friday night. Foreman was 76.—*PTI*

Diksha, Pranavi in top-10 in Australia

WOLLONGONG, 22 MARCH

Impressive Pranavi Urs joined Diksha Dagar in the top-10 list after carding fine rounds on the penultimate day of the Ford Women's NSW Open here. Diksha added 2-under 69 to her earlier rounds of 67-68 and at 9-under for 54 holes she was tied-eighth in windy conditions. Pranavi after 71-68 shot a superb 5-under 66 to rise to T-10, while rookie Avani Prashanth did her reputation a lot of good with a 1-under 70 that included an eagle on the Par-13th.—*PTI*

Sharma finishes with an eagle but lies 38th

SINGAPORE, 22 MARCH

Shubhankar Sharma finished with an eagle to lie tied 38th, while fellow Indian Veer Ahlawat missed the cut after the second round of the Porsche Singapore Classic, which was reduced to a three-day event due to inclement weather. Sharma, who shot 68 in the first round, added a one-over 72 in the second round, which saw him drop three bogeys, a double bogey, and record three birdies, finishing with an eagle on the 18th hole. He lies four-under for 36 holes at the Laguna National Resort. Ahlawat, who is aiming for a better finish at next week's Hero Indian Open after securing second place last year, had a tough day, carding a 79 after his first-round 73.
—*PTI*

Formidable SRH to start favourite against RR

Sunrisers posted 250-plus totals three times last season

HYDERABAD, 22 MARCH

PHOTO: PTI

Equipped with a balanced squad that features a formidable batting line-up and experienced bowlers, last edition's runners-up Sunrisers Hyderabad will start as favorites in their opening Indian Premier League (IPL) match against Rajasthan Royals here on Sunday.

Sunrisers have some of the most explosive batters in their line-up in Travis Head, Abhishek Sharma, Ishan Kishan, and Heinrich Klaasen, and with a belter of a track likely to offer at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium, they would fancy a massive total in the afternoon match of the double-header day.

SRHvs RR Match starts at 3.30 pm IST

Hyderabad VS Rajasthan Head To Head PLAYED: 20 Hyderabad Won: 11 Rajasthan Won: 9

The return of India all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy after an injury is also expected to add to the arsenal of the Sunrisers. With the kind of form Abhishek and Head have been having recently, the Sunrisers supporters can expect to see impressive strokes.

With few established names in the bowling department of the Royals, except England pacer Jofra Archer, there is every possibility that the Sunrisers can eye another 250-plus total if they bat first on Sunday.

Sunrisers posted 250-plus totals three times last season, including 287 against Royal Challengers Bangalore in an away match and 277 against Mumbai Indians at home. The explosive duo of Abhishek and Head scored the highest IPL powerplay total of 125 against Delhi Capitals in the third instance when they posted 266.

The experienced pace duo of captain Pat Cummins and Mohammed Shami will man the bowling department along with spinner Adam Zampa another seasoned campaigner.

The 2016 winners Sunrisers look far better placed than the Royals, who will miss skipper Sanju Samson due to his finger injury. Samson cannot keep wickets and field and can only bat with protection on his finger. It won't be a surprise if he comes as an Impact Player.

With the release of Englishman Jos Buttler, the Royals' batting line-up has dwindled though they still have the likes of Shimron Hetmyer, Dhruv Jurel, Nitish Rana, and Yashasvi Jaiswal.

Sunrisers and Royals played two games against each other last season. —*PTI*

CSK lean on spin strength against depleted Mumbai

CHENNAI, 22 MARCH

PHOTO: PTI

Chennai Super Kings will lean on their formidable spin strength under favorable conditions at the Chepauk as well as their recent record against Mumbai Indians when the two sides face each other in their Indian Premier League (IPL) campaign opener here on Sunday.

Five-time winners CSK augmented their spin attack in the IPL mega auction last year by including Ravichandran Ashwin, Noor Ahmad Shreyas Gopal, and Deepak Hooda, with India veteran Ravindra Jadeja also in the mix.

CSKvs MI Match starts at 7.30 pm IST

Chennai VS Mumbai Head To Head PLAYED: 37 Chennai Won: 17 Mumbai Won: 20

CSK's pre-season moves indicate that the spin-friendly conditions at the MA Chidambaram Stadium could be a major factor in their game plan.

For CSK, MS Dhoni will once again be the cynosure of all eyes, having remained with the team since the inception of the IPL in 2008.

On the other hand, the absence of India bowling spearhead Jasprit Bumrah could be acutely felt in the MI ranks as the right-arm pacer remains on a comeback trail from a back-related issue that has kept him sidelined so far this year.

Bumrah is expected to miss the initial stages of this IPL and his absence will leave MI without their lethal weapon in the death overs, presenting the management with a headache to work with other options and strategies.

MI will also be without regular skipper Hardik Pandya for this clash as the India all-rounder serves a one-match ban for the side's slow over-rate in their final league match last year. —*PTI*

Rahane makes fifty but RCB limits KKR to 174/8

CHENNAI, 22 MARCH

Skipper Ajinkya Rahane
PHOTO: PTI

Skipper Ajinkya Rahane made a wonderful 56 but defending champions Kolkata Knight Riders could only manage a sub-par 174 for eight against Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the opening match of the IPL 2025 here on Saturday.

Rahane made his fifty off just 31 balls and shared a 103-run stand for the second wicket with Sunil Narine (44, 26b) as at one stage KKR looked to break the 200-run margin with ease.

However, RCB bowlers led by left-arm spinner Krunal Pandya (3/29) staged a splendid comeback. Josh Hazlewood got two wickets.

Brief scores: Kolkata Knight Riders: 174/8 in 20 overs (Ajinkya Rahane 56, Sunil Narine 44, Angkrish Raghuvanshi 30; Krunal Pandya 3/29). —*PTI*

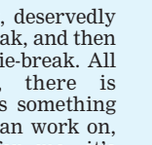
Feel different from missing first 3 IPL matches: Samson

HYDERABAD, 22 MARCH

Sanju Samson on Saturday conceded that missing the first three IPL matches of this season "feels a bit different" but placed his trust on stand-in skipper Riyan Parag to guide Rajasthan Royals well in his absence.Samson is yet to recover completely from a right index finger injury that he suffered during the series against England. "I have never missed a game as a complete player. Coming to the season as not fully fit feels a bit different. But the team looks good. We are also happy to have Rahul Dravid back with us," said Samson here on the eve of the match against Sunrisers Hyderabad. Samson said Parag is "capable" to lead the team as he has shown enough qualities to earn that honour.

"I am not going to be the captain of Rajasthan Royals forever. There has to be someone who is going to come and someone we'll have to groom after I leave or after changes are made in captaincy. —*PTI*

> We are going to become the greatest Punjab Kings side
>
> -Ricky Ponting, head coach



Injury-free Nikhat aims for comeback in May

GREATER NOIDA, 22 MARCH

No one moves on so quickly in life, Nikhat Zareen said, her voice heavy with the weight of her painful Paris Olympics experience. Struggling with a knee injury after Paris and the looming uncertainty surrounding the sport's future in the Olympics, the two-time World Champion found herself grappling with the thought that her dream of standing on the Olympic podium might never be realised. But the recent inclusion of boxing in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics has reignited the spark of hope within her. After being sidelined with injury since the Paris Games, the 28-year-old is now determined to make a comeback and aims to be competition-ready by May."I had a minor injury (meniscus) which required 3-4 months of rehab.

It's fine now but, if you want to enter the competition circuit, you need to have ring endurance. So, I will be back in May," Zareen said on the sidelines of the ongoing women's boxing championships here.

With several major competitions scheduled this year, Zareen said her main focus will be on the World Championship in September, followed by the World Cup, which will be hosted by India."My main focus will be on the World Championship and also the World Cup which India is hosting."In her Olympic debut, Zareen's campaign ended in the round of 16 as she went down to eventual champion Wu Yu of China."No one moves on so fast in life. Nobody moves on from what they have gone through. But I have accepted it, it's okay to lose. Now it's time to focus on the future and move on from that."Reflecting on her bout in Paris, Zareen added: "I watched my bout and of course, there were a lot of mistakes. After watching the bout, you always feel that 'oh I could have landed a punch here there'. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

ABDULLA ABOOBACKER WINS TRIPLE JUMP GOLD

BENGALURU, 22 MARCH

Ace triple jumper Abdulla Aboobacker won gold with a leap of 17.19m at the fourth edition of the Indian Open Jumps but missed the Tokyo World Championship qualifying mark of 17.22m here on Saturday.

Despite having two legal jumps out of six attempts, Aboobacker expressed his satisfaction saying he was elated to have crossed the 17m mark in March. "I could have done better. But crossing the 17m mark was a good start to the season," he said after the event. The main goal, said the Indian Air Force jumper, was to achieve an automatic qualification mark of 17.22m to book a ticket to the 2025 Tokyo World Athletics Championships in September.

He missed the World Athletics entry standard here but was hopeful of achieving his goal in his next competition. "I'm confident of improving my personal best of 17.19m next month," he added. —*PTI*

WOMEN'S NATIONAL C'SHIPS

Nitu, and Jaismine start with wins

GREATER NOIDA, 22 MARCH

PHOTO: PTI

Former world champion Nitu Ghanghas and Commonwealth Games medallist Jaismine Lamboria registered commanding victories, while Railway boxers showcased their dominance on the second day of the 8th Elite Women's National Boxing Championships here on Saturday.

Both Nitu (48kg) and Jasmine (57kg) cruised through their opening-round bouts, each securing a resounding 5-0 unanimous victory.

Haryana's Nitu, who won the gold medal at the 2023 IBA World Championships in New Delhi, was too powerful for Anjali Choudhary of Rajasthan in the Minimum weight category.

With a notable height disadvantage, Anjali struggled to land any impact punches, resorting mostly to clinching in a futile attempt to stall Nitu's onslaught.

The world champion's superior technique and relentless pressure sealed her dominant win.

Representing the Services Control Sports Board (SSCB), Jaismine, the Birmingham Commonwealth Games bronze medallist, appeared slightly off her rhythm in the opening round.

However, once she found her rhythm, there was no stopping her. Jasmine quickly dispatched UP's Ice Prajapati with ease, cementing her place in the next round.

The reigning 60kg national champion had reclaimed the women's 57kg Paris Olympic quota for the country, which India had to surrender after holder Parveen Hooda was suspended for whereabout failure.

Since the Olympics, she has remained in the 57kg weight class. —*PTI*

Novak Djokovic shines on return

DUBAI, 22 MARCH

Having been forced to retire from his Australian Open semi-final against Alexander Zverev in January, and suffering opening-round defeats in Doha and Indian Wells, Djokovic entered Miami on a three-match losing streak. Yet the fourth seed delivered a clinical display to see off Rinky Hijikata 6-0, 7-6(1) and spark hopes of a turn in form."I wanted to make a statement to myself and others that I'm still able to play at a high level," said Djokovic. "I lost two tournaments in the first rounds, so I was eager to get the win in the first match in Miami."[I played] perfect tennis for a set and a half. I think he had stepped it up in the second set, deservedly took it to a tie-break, and then I played a great tie-break. All in all, there is always something you can work on, but for me, it's just about maintaining this level of tennis and trying to be even better if I can as the tournament progresses." —*PTI*

FERRARI VICTORY

Hamilton wins Chinese F1 Sprint race

SHANGHAI, 22 MARCH

Lewis Hamilton has won his first race for Ferrari, securing Saturday's Sprint victory from pole position following an early duel with Red Bull Racing's Max Verstappen at the Chinese Formula 1 Grand Prix.

Hamilton got a great start to take the lead into turn one and managed the gap to Verstappen until the Dutchman was passed for second on lap 15 by McLaren's Oscar Piastri into the back straight's hairpin.

Ferrari's recruit was then able to stretch his legs to his maiden Sprint win, with the Brit coming home almost 6.9 seconds ahead of Piastri – for eight points (nine overall) and a three-place jump to seventh in the standings.

PHOTO: X

"The last like five laps or something I was in a pretty comfortable position. It's hard to put into words what it feels like," Hamilton said.

"It's a Sprint race, is not the main race, but even just think to get that it's just a good stepping stone to where I'm working towards."

Hamilton is still enjoying every new moment with the Scuderia, despite having secured a record-equaling seven titles and 104 wins, with the Chinese Sprint and his romp to the win all about managing the tire wear.

"I got in the car extra early because I just wanted to be present and enjoy it, because I hadn't been there for a while," he said.

"(I got a) good start and challenging race. It is generally really close between all of us. But the tire degradation today

Piastri takes his first F1 pole

McLaren's Oscar Piastri scored his first pole position in Formula One ahead of Sunday's Chinese Grand Prix, with the Australian delivering two sizzling laps which were both quick enough to take the top spot on the grid. Piastri, who was second in Saturday morning's Sprint race, could go one better from pole position on Sunday.

Argentina without Lionel Messi wins at Uruguay

ARGENTINA, 22 MARCH

Argentina didn't miss Lionel Messi, Lautaro Martínez, and other key players and beat Uruguay away 1-0 in convincing fashion in their South American World Cup qualifying match.

Thiago Almada scored the winner with a powerful curled shot from the edge of the box on Friday, putting the defending champions one point away from its direct spot in the tournament next year.

Argentina leads the round-robin competition with 28 points after 13 matches and could secure its place with a home draw with Brazil on Tuesday. The team of coach Lionel Scaloni already has 15 points ahead of 7th-placed Bolivia, with only five rounds to the end of the competition.

The last time the two soccer powerhouses clashed, Argentina won 1-0 at the Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro.Earlier, Ecuador defeated Venezuela 2-1 and moved into second place in the South American World Cup, edging close to reaching the tournament once again. —*PTI*